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BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY IN EUROPE  
TO THE END OF THE 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY



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BRITISH FOREIGN  
POLICY IN EUROPE  
TO THE END OF THE 19TH CENTURY

*A Rough Outline*

BY

H. E. EGERTON, M.A.

BEIT PROFESSOR OF COLONIAL HISTORY AND FELLOW OF  
ALL SOULS' COLLEGE, OXFORD

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## PREFACE

*Ne sutor ultra crepidam* is a wise maxim, to which the progress of time gives increasing authority. It may seem, then, to savour of presumption that one, whose work has been mainly concerned with colonial and imperial history, should embark upon the difficult waters of European politics. But, on the other hand, it must be remembered that, up to the present time, colonial and imperial history cannot be understood without reference to the European system from which it took its rise, just as a knowledge of a particular limb is impossible without some study of the body as a whole.

‘The only begetter’ of this volume was Mr. Philip Kerr of *The Round Table*, who, in conversation, suggested to me that there was room for a book which, by dealing with British foreign policy apart from a narrative of events, should endeavour, without undue length, to put forward the views of past British statesmen. Unfortunately Mr. Kerr has been too busy for me to consult him during the progress of my work, so that I cannot say how far it fulfils the idea that was in his mind.

The intelligent reader, who does me the honour of reading this book to the end, will notice that the

first two hundred years are dealt with much more summarily than is the later period.

For the earlier period I have largely relied on secondary authorities, together with such contemporaries as Mun, Thurloe's *State Papers*, Cromwell's *Speeches* and Bishop Burnet. Coxe may have been a dull man, but his *Life of Sir R. Walpole* is a very useful book. Captain Basil Williams's admirable *Life of Chatham* has furnished me with several quotations from that statesman. For the relations of England and Holland I have made use of a pamphlet with that title by Mr. E. Barker.

From the eve of the French Revolution I have called in aid the actual words, written or spoken, of the leading statesmen and diplomatists who were responsible for British foreign policy. My main authorities for the chapter on the period of the French Revolution and Napoleon have been Pitt's *Speeches*, Burke's *Works*, Lord Malmesbury's *Diaries*, *The Dropmore Manuscripts*, *The Paget Papers* and Mr. J. Holland Rose's *Select Despatches relating to the 3rd Coalition against France*. Mr. Rose's volumes on Pitt also contain much valuable material. For the chapter on the Concert of Europe I have mainly relied on the Castlereagh and Wellington *Correspondence and Despatches* and on Canning's *Speeches* and letters. I must also express my indebtedness to Professor Alison Phillips's suggestive *Confederation of Europe*.

For Chapters VI., VII. and VIII. I have for the most part drawn on the public dispatches, letters, speeches, memoirs and biographies of the protagonists in the political arena and of distinguished

ambassadors. Fortunately English literature is singularly rich in such material.

I have, however, derived much help from Sir John Hall's *England and the Orleans Monarchy*, a work of authority to which I may be allowed to pay my humble tribute of respect ; and from the careful, as well as brilliant, volume of *Essays on Foreign Politics*, by Lord Salisbury, reprinted from the *Quarterly Review*. To understand anything of Lord Salisbury's own policy, when Foreign Secretary, it is still necessary to consult the files of *The Times* newspaper. Considering the position he occupied, both in domestic and in international politics, it is curious that no collection of Lord Salisbury's speeches has been published since the two volumes edited by the late Mr. Pulling, which came out as long ago as 1885.

To one who, during this period of trial, considers the kaleidoscope of past foreign politics, the paralysing doubt may occur, whether, possibly, the present struggle might not, for some years at least, have been averted ; in which case the whirligig of time might have brought about a peaceful solution. It would seem that in the case of a few intellectuals such a belief

'Slacks\*the tense nerves, saps the wound-up spring  
Of the act that should and shall be.'

But, in fact, past history, considered in broad outline, points to no such inconclusive *impasse*. There have been crises in British history when failure to rise to the occasion would have meant the loss of the whole future. Such were the times when

Philip II., Louis XIV. and Napoleon aimed at world-supremacy; and such, we may confidently maintain, is the present time of trial, when to scotch not kill the snake of Hohenzollern militarism would mean the putting back of the clock of European and world progress for many a long day.

This subject, however, belongs to another book and another author. There only remains to me the pleasant duty of expressing my heartfelt thanks to Mr. Ernest Barker, of New College, who has most kindly read my proof sheets, and helped me with most valuable suggestions. It is hardly necessary to add that Mr. Barker is not responsible for any of my opinions, nor for such faults of omission or commission as may be found in the volume.

H. E. EGERTON.

OXFORD, May, 1917.

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*But where shall wisdom be found ? and where is the place of understanding ?*

*Man knoweth not the price thereof ; neither is it found in the land of the living.*

*The depth saith, it is not in me : and the sea saith, it is not with me.*

*It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof.*

. . . . .

*Whence, then, cometh wisdom ? and where is the place of understanding ?*

*Seeing it is hid from the eyes of all living, and kept close from the fowls of the air.*

*Destruction and death say, we have heard the fame thereof with our ears.*

*God understandeth the way thereof, and he knoweth the place thereof.*

*For he looketh to the ends of the earth, and seeth under the whole heaven.*

. . . . .

*And unto man he said, Behold the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom : and to depart from evil is understanding.*





## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTORY

IN the following pages the endeavour is made to tell in brief outline, mainly out of the mouths of those chiefly concerned, the story of English foreign policy, so far as Europe is concerned. Questions affecting America and the Far East are intentionally ignored, partly because they are adequately dealt with in numerous books, and partly because their inclusion would have necessitated a complete alteration in the scheme of the volume. For the purpose in hand the use of quotations is necessary. What Tom, Dick or Harry may think, in the cloistered seclusion of a University town, matters very little to anyone except the aforesaid Tom, Dick or Harry. But what the actual parties to the conflict have said and thought, amidst the heat and burden of the day, matters a great deal. No attempt has been made to call in aid unpublished material. The amount of authority contained in the printed correspondence and biographies of leading statesmen and diplomats is so ample that, for present purposes, it is unnecessary to look behind it.

This little volume is a modest attempt to answer the practical question, how much of truth there is

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in the charge so often made by German publicists and historians that the past history of British foreign policy has been conspicuous for its display of perfidy and unscrupulousness. The answer to this is to marshal the evidence by which it can be shown that, whilst British statesmen may often have been mistaken and wrong-headed, the policy of the country, on the whole, has been singularly honest and straightforward. 'The English,' said Napoleon III. in 1853, 'are manly enemies and manly friends, and that is more than I can say for others.' Again and again one is reminded of the description by Henry James of the English, as a very 'decent' people. It is of course possible to suggest, like the Satan of the book of Job, that England's insular position and her early appearance upon the world-stage have made the path of honesty less difficult for her; but with regard to this we can only say that Omniscience is required to adjust the scales where the respective strength of temptation is to be taken into account. The mere human intelligence can only judge the tree by its fruit.

Before entering upon the confused darkness of the individual trees, it may be well to make a brief general survey of the *contours* of the forest. Considerations of Trade from early times tended to promote a national policy. Still, in a wider sense, although Wolsey is regarded by some as the first great English Foreign Minister, English foreign policy, so far as it was national, may be said to date from the reign of Elizabeth. Norman, Angevin and Lancastrian kings in their continental transactions were pursuing dynastic, not English,

objects ; and the stimulus of a religious antinomy was needed before English foreign policy could become really national. Under Elizabeth, England made the great venture ; and singed the beard of the dreaded enemy. During her reign we have the stimulating spectacle of governmental machinery lagging behind the individual efforts of an unshackled people.

With the accession of James I. a new scene opens. Spain is more seriously wounded than men at the time recognised ; and in an age when economic questions are coming to the fore, the economic enmity of the Netherlands tends to modify firmly held political beliefs. James I. substitutes for the war *à outrance* against Spain and the Papacy an anticipation of the doctrine of the balance of power. But James, though no fool intellectually, seems to have been wholly wanting in the moral and physical courage which secure for intellect its due appreciation ; and amidst a warring and hostile Europe his pregnant ideas fail to come to fruition. The foreign policy of Charles I. need not detain us here. In the first years of his reign, under the influence of the rash Buckingham, it seemed to base itself on the model of the great Elizabethans ; but at bottom it was wholly dissimilar, as lacking in earnestness and continuity. During the last years of his reign Charles's energies, such as they were, were engulfed in his struggle with the Parliament. In his political beliefs on questions of foreign policy Cromwell reverted to the creed of Raleigh ; but the forces of the time were too strong for him ; and, shocked and scandalised, he had to look on, whilst the two champions

of Protestantism fell at each other's throats. The fantastic scheme of forming a federation between the people of England and the people of the Netherlands proves how seriously the actual situation shocked the consciences of serious men. None the less, in the economic field, at any rate, the sword was not sheathed ; and the Navigation Acts of the Commonwealth and of Charles II. were a claim put forward to the world at large of the economic *αὐτάρκεια* (self-sufficiency) of the English Empire.

In his heart and in his intellect Charles II. had no desire but to pursue the general policy of his great predecessor, so far as it tended to imperial efficiency and ascendancy, but he was gravelled for want of money ; and he found the line of least resistance in accepting the bribes of Louis XIV. We must freely admit that Charles cheated everyone, himself perhaps most of all ; and that no words can exaggerate the shamelessness of his behaviour. But it would be unfair to tar the suspicious and discontented English nation with the brush of Charles's reputation ; and it must be remembered that, what he gained by tortuous diplomacy, he gained for himself, at the expense of the English nation. James II. was more honest and more stupid than his brother ; but he was involved in the same French meshes.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Seeley in his *Growth of British Policy* maintains that the foreign policy of the Stuarts was dictated by dynastic, as opposed to national, considerations. But, though James I. had doubtless always in view the interests of his son-in-law, he yet may have groped, in a confused and halting way, after the principle of a European balance of power. It was not, probably, because he was half French and had lived abroad in exile, that Charles II. became the creature of France, but because his one want

With the Revolution of 1688 English foreign policy once more assumes a dignified and national position. The question at issue in the war which closed with the Peace of Utrecht was, whether France should dominate Europe and the world. Already it was recognised that, if France possessed what is now Belgium, England would be at her mercy. The victories of Marlborough put an end to the pretensions of Louis in Europe; but, inasmuch as the recuperative powers of France were very great, and the war had only reached its first stage in America, its eventual renewal was inevitable. Much difference of opinion has existed with respect to the adequacy of the terms obtained by Great Britain at the Peace of Utrecht, but there seems no foundation for the accusation, fathered by party bitterness, that the signing of a separate peace was a base betrayal of Dutch interests. The objects of the Allies were accomplished, in so far as the Spanish Netherlands were assigned to Austria and not to Spain, now under a Bourbon dynasty. Moreover, the Barrier Treaty of 1715 recognised the Dutch Sovereignty of the mouth of the Scheldt, and gave to the Dutch the right to garrison a number of barrier fortresses on the boundary between the Austrian Netherlands and France. The fact, however, must be recognised that the Peace left France and Spain united as they had never been in the past.

was money, and money could be obtained more easily and in more abundance from the French King than from other sources. Moreover, Seeley does not always seem to recognise the force of commercial rivalry in running athwart the natural channels of English policy.

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But, though the renewal of war may have been inevitable, it was none the less possible to postpone the evil day ; and the honest attempt of Walpole to secure an Anglo-French *Entente* only foundered on the indignation aroused in England by Spanish doings in respect of trade in the South American Seas, and the *rapprochement* brought about between the two Bourbon Monarchies. The Seven Years' War finally gave to Great Britain the hegemony in America ; and it serves to emphasise the eternal *res duplex* of history that the same terms of peace which were condemned by Pitt as a betrayal of British interests, were regarded by French statesmen as so severe that they necessitated a policy of revenge. Here again, as is contended later, there seems no truth in the view that the peace involved a betrayal of Frederick the Great.

It is fortunately not necessary here to enter into the melancholy story of blundering and mismanagement that threatened to bring to an end the British Empire. What, from our point of view, is noteworthy is that, when Great Britain had to adapt herself to the new state of things, the younger Pitt, instead of following in the footsteps of his great father, and holding France to be the inevitable enemy, sought to revive the policy of Walpole and to build up friendly relations between Great Britain and France. The policy ended in failure, through the crash of the French Revolution ; but, when Pitt is blamed for going to war with revolutionary France, it should be remembered what a wrench a French war involved with his

past policy. In truth Pitt occupied a middle position between fanatics of the monarchical idea, like Burke, who would have declared a Holy War, on behalf of sacred principles, and light-hearted sentimentalists like Fox, who would endure anything so long as it was the work of men professing liberal principles. When France, under whatever specious professions, practically annexed Belgium and threatened to annex Holland, Pitt recognised that it was time to interfere; and a new justification for his course was given when Napoleon seized the helm, and developed his schemes of world-dominion.

It is disappointing to find that so impartial and wise a historian as Sorel considered that the one object of Great Britain in the French War, which began in 1793, was the attainment of commercial and maritime supremacy. We may admit that, as the horizon of the conflict widened, and British statesmen recognised that they were confronted by a Power which, on occasions, seemed to have behind it the whole forces of Europe, they realised more and more that only, by the fullest consolidation and development of their ascendancy at sea, could they hope to oppose with any chance of success their mighty enemy. But to admit this does not imply that England entered into the war with a deliberate intention of profiting by it. In this connection there is consolation in the fact that Sorel seems to have been mistaken in his view of Pitt. He considers him as the inveterate enemy of France, and ascribes his resignation in 1801 not to its true cause, his opinions regarding Ireland, but to his



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unwillingness to enter into the negotiations for peace that had become inevitable.<sup>1</sup>

Pitt was by nature and inclination no War Minister. He, however, reluctantly advised that England should become a party to the war, in 1793, not from any idea of world-supremacy, but because he honestly believed that British interests were being sacrificed by the action of France ; and because those interests had received the guarantee of solemn treaties. It is the stock argument of the controversialist to say that what counts is the presence of selfish interests. Without these, treaties would be to all men scraps of paper. But, in answer to this, it must be remembered that the statesman is in the first place the trustee of his own nation's interests ; and, as such, would deserve punishment if he entered into a treaty that was not to the interest of his own country ; and next that, because a bargain is profitable, it does not follow that its enforcement may not be itself a moral obligation.

Through the long twenty-two years' war, which only closed after the victory of Waterloo, Great Britain, alone of the allies, remained constant to the cause of crushing Napoleon ; though even she seemed, for a moment, to tire of the task when a Ministry of Mediocrities signed the ineffectual Peace of Amiens. The documents prove that, whilst British statesmen showed more determination than their European *confrères* in the time of stress and strain, so also, in the hour of victory, they displayed greater moderation, a more statesmanlike reasonable-

<sup>1</sup> On Pitt's resignation see *Diaries and Correspondence of the 1st Earl of Malmesbury*, Ed. by the 3rd Earl, vol. iv. pp. 75-9.

ness, and a clearer recognition that a strong France was necessary for the balance of power in Europe. No one can rise from a perusal of the dispatches of Castlereagh and of Wellington, during the time of the new European settlement, but with feelings of increased respect for these great men and for the orderly society of which they were the natural outcome.

It used to be supposed by some that Castlereagh and Wellington truckled to the Holy Alliance ; and that Canning did a glorious work in unloosing the fetters of that odious system from the British body politic. But we shall see that both Castlereagh and Wellington recognised, from the first, the weak point in the creed of the Tzar Alexander ; and, if they held on as long as possible to the alliance with Russia, Austria and Prussia, it was not because they were reactionaries, but because, after their experience of war, they knew the value of peace, and believed—can we say wrongly?—that in the maintenance of the Concert of Europe and of the settlement established in 1815 there lay the best chance of its preservation. It would be idle to deny that, in their opinions, Castlereagh and Wellington were much more out of sympathy with the national aspirations that were beginning to come to the fore, than were their successors, Canning and Palmerston ; but in the actual conduct of affairs the difference was not nearly so great as might have been expected. Thus we find Palmerston, who above others might have been credited with the desire to make sweeping changes, writing to his brother in April, 1835 : ‘ The Duke has acted

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with great fairness and honour in his administration of our foreign relations. . . . He made no arbitrary changes in our system of policy. The truth, however, is that English interests continue the same, let who will be in office ; and that upon leading principles and great measures men of both sides, when they come to act dispassionately and with responsibility upon them, will be found acting very much alike.’<sup>1</sup> And yet there was a difference in the characters of public men which reacted upon their methods of administration. Castlereagh and Wellington were, apart from their abilities, typical members of an aristocracy which took its own outstanding position as a matter of course ; and was content to be judged by its acts. The more showy and exuberant nature of Canning necessitated manifestations of its own importance which sometimes brought grandiloquence perilously near to the ridiculous. Witness the famous dictum regarding the Spanish American Colonies cited below. It was maintained by Canning’s biographer that he reduced to a system the foreign policy of England ; that system being to hold the balance ‘ not only between contending nations, but between contending principles ’ ;<sup>2</sup> but, as the same authority affirms that ‘ at the time when he assumed the direction of our foreign affairs, Great Britain did not possess that share of influence amongst the other Powers of Europe to which she was so justly entitled by

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Lord Palmerston*, by Sir H. Lytton Bulwer, vol. iii. p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> *The Political Life of G. Canning*, by A. G. Stapleton, vol. i. p. 474.

her rank and position;<sup>1</sup> his opinion need not be taken too seriously. It is true that Canning maintained that the next war in Europe would be a war not so much of armies as of opinions; that it was therefore the duty of England to maintain neutrality between conflicting principles, 'letting the professors of violent and exaggerated doctrines on both sides feel that it is not their interest to convert an umpire into an adversary.'<sup>2</sup> But it was not always easy to apply this excellent doctrine to questions of practical politics. The prestige of England, it cannot be too often insisted, depended upon the blood and treasure she had poured forth for the cause of Europe; and not upon Parliamentary eloquence, however fervid, or official dispatches, however deft; and the little finger of Wellington counted for more in the Councils of Europe than the whole presence of Canning, with his attendant figures of speech.

It is difficult to form a just estimate of Palmerston, the Minister who, as Foreign Secretary or Premier, directed the affairs of the country for most of the years between 1830 and 1865. To some he remains the embodiment of the great days of England when all Europe quailed before the assertion of British citizenship. Others are convinced, with Lord Granville, that he 'wasted the strength derived by England from the great war by his brag.'<sup>3</sup> In the negotiations connected with the subject of Mehemet Ali he displayed remarkable courage and prescience;

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 473.

<sup>2</sup> *Speeches of G. Canning*, vol iii. p. 90.

<sup>3</sup> *Life of Lord Granville*, by Lord E. Fitz Maurice, vol ii. p. 63.

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unlike his colleagues, rating at their true value the bluster of France and the ambitions of Mehemet Ali. Still on occasions his restless and interfering diplomacy involved Great Britain in serious risk of war. It would be unfair to characterise the genial and jolly English country gentleman, who in his old age was the idol of the English nation, as a bully ; but in some of his proceedings he came perilously near to deserving the title. Few who have read will forget a scathing article by Lord Salisbury, the burden of which was that the policy of England, as understood by Palmerston and Lord Russell, was to bluster and intimidate, in the case of the weak ; and, in the case of the strong, to bluster and then to run away. Palmerston more than once fought, along with the Queen and the Prince Consort, for naval and military estimates more closely corresponding to Great Britain's imperial obligations. Still, during most of the years he was in power, those naval and military resources were miserably inadequate in relation to the commanding attitude assumed by Palmerston. His uncivil treatment of the *corps diplomatique* was a purely gratuitous addition to the country's difficulties ; and, unlike Melbourne, Peel, and, at a later date, Disraeli, he never learnt to accommodate himself to the position of a subject, however pre-eminent, who has to carry with him the approval of his constitutional monarch.<sup>1</sup> With all his bonhomie

<sup>1</sup> But note the verdict of Lord Clarendon : ' The Queen and Prince are wrong in wishing that courtiers rather than ministers should conduct the affairs of the country. . . . They labour under the curious mistake that the F.O. is their particular Department and that they have a right to control, if not to

and good humour the note of chivalrous respect was wanting in Palmerston's character. So much must be said because, in the following pages, the keystone of British policy will often be found in the personality of this extraordinary, ordinary man.<sup>1</sup>

From 1830 onwards up to the *débâcle* of Sedan the clue to British policy will, for the most part, be found in our relations with France. Different as they were in every other way, Louis Philippe and Napoleon III. were alike in this, that they both had laid to heart the moral of Napoleon Bonaparte's fall, and recognised that for France the path of safety lay in friendly relations with England. Oddly enough they were also alike in this, that they both kicked against the pricks of their innermost conviction ; and both brought their country to the verge of war with England. The story of the Spanish marriages seems to us now a dingy tale enough ; mainly interesting for the proof it gave that the philosopher, turned practical politician, may outdo the latter in the shadiest side of his work. Even though Louis Philippe was really playing for safety—and his object was the obtaining of a generous army vote—still, while inflammatory material is flying about, there is always risk of a genuine fire ; and if Louis Philippe, as is probable, always at heart adhered to an Anglo-

direct, the policy of England.' (*Life and Letters of the 4th Earl of Clarendon*, by Sir H. Maxwell, vol. i. p. 341.)

<sup>1</sup> 'Half-hornet, half-butterfly,' according to young Morier in 1848, indignant at the treatment by Palmerston of his father, David Morier. (*Memoirs and Letters of Sir R. Morier*, vol. i. p. 62.)

French *entente*, he assuredly succeeded very effectually in dissembling his preference. Yet more emphatically do these words apply to Louis Napoleon. Reasons are given elsewhere for the belief that he remained throughout his reign at heart loyal to the British connexion; but it must be remembered that, against this, there was always a cross current making in the opposite direction. As time went on Great Britain, as represented by men like Palmerston and Lord John Russell, was more and more carried away by the national movement throughout Europe; and, even in the so-called benighted days of crude Toryism, it had not been possible altogether to resist the claims of Greece. Still, upon the whole, it remained true that Great Britain stood for the maintenance of the existing settlement of Europe, and was prepared to throw her weight into the scale against any disturber of that settlement. The words of Bismarck remain always true. 'It is only by European treaties that European law is established.' Nor need we subscribe to the cynical addendum: 'If, however, you want to apply the standard of morality and justice to the latter, they must, well-nigh all, be abolished.'<sup>1</sup>

To Napoleon III., on the other hand, the settlement of 1815 was associated with the failure and disgrace of his uncle and of France; and one of his most cherished aspirations was the holding of another European Congress that should efface for ever the landmarks of the old system. An estimate of Louis Napoleon's character will be attempted

<sup>1</sup> *Bismarck the Man and the Statesman, Reflections and Reminiscences of* (English Trans.), vol. ii. p. 7.

on a later page ; but, inasmuch as the intuitions of the poet often transcend the philosophy of the historian, it is disappointing to find so little light and leading, for our present purposes, in Browning's suggestive poem ' Prince Hohenstiel Schwangau.'

So far as Great Britain was concerned, in the Europe of 1830 and in the Europe of 1852, as in the Europe of 1914, the main danger spot was Belgium. In 1830 the attempt to form a single strong kingdom of the Netherlands ended in failure ; though recent events have taught us that the attempt in itself was by no means unwise ; and it is far from clear that more enlightened methods of carrying the Union into effect might not have met with very different results. Be this as it may, the separation of Belgium from Holland having become inevitable, and the system of frontier fortresses having broken down, the question arose, in what manner could the ends aimed at by the previous settlement be equally secured ? The answer lay in the treaty of 1839, guaranteeing the integrity of Belgium, to which the great European Powers became parties. There was one possible danger against which a treaty, guaranteeing a Belgium desirous to remain independent, was no protection. What would have happened had the great majority of the Belgian people preferred to become French subjects ? Count Vitzthum wrote in June, 1860 : ' The annexation of Belgium is unquestionably on the *tapis* in Paris. Numerous agents are working the clergy, the nobility and, above all, the working classes and boast of exaggerated success. Napoleon is said to have lately thrown out the remark that



if the Belgians are bent on becoming Frenchmen, he could not help it. . . . "We shall live to see great things in the next few weeks, and those in Belgium," Lord Derby whispered to me to-day, and shrugged his shoulders when I asked him what England would do.' <sup>1</sup>

If Vitzhum is to be trusted, British statesmen, before this danger, showed some tendency to accept the inevitable. 'Lord Wodehouse' (it is true that he was only an under-secretary), 'in answer to the same question, said yesterday to one of my colleagues that England would look on. If the Belgians were determined to be annexed, who could prevent it? It was no use reckoning on Germany. Austria would leave Prussia in the lurch on the Rhine, just as Prussia left Austria in the lurch in Italy. Prussia, even in alliance with Germany, could not go to war with France. The Bund existed only in name. The best thing, therefore, would be for the readjustment of frontier desired by France to be effected without war.' <sup>2</sup>

Fortunately there seems to have been no little exaggeration in the view that the Belgians might wish to throw in their lot with France; and the question has always been able to be approached without the added difficulty which would have arisen, had Belgian national ideals collided with the measures necessary for the safety of Great Britain. As hard cases make bad law, so, in the field of politics, the contemplation of hard cases is mischievous, as tending to suggest the alternatives of complete inaction or of undue interference.

<sup>1</sup> *St. Petersburg and London*, vol. ii. p. 83.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

The story of the Crimean War points the obvious moral that the first thing indispensable is to know one's own mind ; and that a policy of drift is not likely to be very fruitful. In fact the effect of the Crimean War was like that of not very antiseptic sticking plaster applied to a wound. It proved a palliative not a permanent remedy for the Eastern question.

The subject of Italian unity gives British statesmen the opportunity of showing their generous sympathies, without endangering national interests ; but in the Polish and Danish questions we note how perilous is the use of strong words, unless there is force behind, and the intention to use that force. Whatever our views with regard to the original Schleswig-Holstein question, we must all be agreed that Great Britain cut a singularly sorry figure in the subsequent proceedings.

On all these questions, the Crimea, Italian Unity, Poland and Schleswig-Holstein, we had acted in co-operation, actual, possible or intended, with France ; but the war of 1870 was to bring upon the scene a new Europe, wherein a new claimant for supremacy would upset the balance of the past. For England the issue of the war was especially unfortunate, because both parties, most unfairly, accused her of not having shown proper neutrality ; their only point of union being a common grievance against Great Britain. It is probable that Bismarck was not altogether fooling him, when he expressed to Mr. Odo Russell his sense of the importance of friendly feelings between Germany and England. But he had his own game to play which involved embittering, as far as possible, relations between

England and the rest of Europe. When France, not unnaturally, sought some compensation for European disaster in the increase and the development of her Colonial Empire, Bismarck's game seemed permanently successful; as, what with hostile interests in Egypt and elsewhere, there seemed no point in world-politics where the interests of the two countries did not meet and conflict. Not till the memorable settlement of 1904, which is outside the range of this volume, did this unhappy state of things come to an end.

It must not, however, be thought that, at any moment of time, the feeling of Great Britain was otherwise than friendly to France. The great majority of the British people had started, when the Franco-German war began, with more or less strong German sympathies; but, as the war went on, had, more and more, shifted to the other side. In 1874, and again in 1875, it appears probable<sup>1</sup> that Bismarck, alarmed by the rapidity with which France had recovered, contemplated a further knock-out blow. In 1874 a private appeal from the Queen to the German Emperor was for the moment successful; but the danger recurred in a more threatening form in the following year, when the Russian Tzar and the Queen of England both exerted themselves on behalf of peace.

Unhappily, on this point alone were the British and Russian Governments agreed. The Eastern

<sup>1</sup> It should in fairness be noted that Bismarck always stoutly repudiated any such intention (see Bismarck, *op. cit.* vol. ii. pp. 189-93); on the general question see *Memoirs of Sir R. Morier*, vol. ii. pp. 323-55; *Lord Lyons*, by Lord Newton (Pop. Ed. in one volume), pp. 328-42.

question was again coming to the fore, reviving the old differences between England and Russia. In 1876 a revolt against Turkish misrule broke out in Bosnia and Herzegovina ; and a rising in Bulgaria was suppressed by ruthless methods. The French and German Consuls at Salonica were murdered by the Turkish mob ; and the general unrest spread to Servia and Montenegro. Under the Berlin memorandum the three Imperial Courts agreed upon certain reforms to be imposed upon the Turkish Government under European supervision. France and Italy adhered to this instrument ; but Great Britain, through distrust of Russian methods, refused her consent ; and thus Turkey was encouraged to defy the will of Europe. It is noteworthy that Lord Stratford de Redcliffe, in his extreme old age, expressed his conviction that ' if in the beginning England had taken her place at the side of the three Emperors, the cloud on the horizon would never have swelled into its present colossal proportions. " It seems to me," he said, " that Russia has been gradually drawn into a position from which she can hardly retreat with credit." ' <sup>1</sup>

Be this as it may, henceforth the opposed characters of the two great leaders, Gladstone and Disraeli, dominated the stage and decided British policy. Disraeli revolted large portions of his fellow countrymen by his apparent indifference to horrible wrongdoing. Gladstone,<sup>2</sup> who seemed to forget that he

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Gladstone*, by J. Morley, vol. ii. p. 163.

<sup>2</sup> Note Sir R. Morier's general verdict of his intellectual putting together. ' I have come to it under this similitude, that his

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had been a leading member\* of successive Ministries under whom the Turkish Government had become what it was, approached the question from its immediate moral aspect, and seemed wholly careless of all the considerations that had hitherto decided British policy. Each statesman brought out and rendered more dangerous the faults of the other. As the tone of Disraeli grew more and more cynical, Gladstone seemed more and more to claim to possess the latch-key of the Council Chamber of the Almighty, and to be the bearer of His message. Whether or not there was a room for a third policy, which, while honestly working in favour of the Christian population of Turkey, should not have shown itself willing to give a blank cheque to Russian ambitions, must remain an open question. When the war had run its course and Turkey had been beaten to her knees, Lord Beaconsfield assuredly had the letter of the law on his side, in demanding that the Treaty of San Stefano should not be signed between Russia and Turkey, behind the back of Europe. Russia at first was inclined to demur; and there was needed the threat of war to induce her to accept the Congress which substituted a new treaty for that of San Stefano. The course of history has been so sharply altered by German ambitions that it is a little difficult to realise that

mind resembles the fasces of a Roman lictor, a bundle of sticks (each of them fit to beat a dog with !) with no organic vegetable life binding them together, and made up promiscuously of every kind of timber—strong ash, oak saplings, and also rotten reeds—and in the middle a great axe with which he can at any moment hew to pieces any opponent who personally attacks him.' (*Memoirs of Sir R. Morier*, vol. ii. p. 302.)

some forty years ago it seemed worth while to risk war rather than that Bulgaria should contain a certain area. But, if the Treaty of San Stefano left a huge Bulgaria as a virtual annexe of Russia, and the Treaty of Berlin brought about, in the words of Bismarck, that Turkey in Europe once more existed, then, from the traditional British point of view, the attitude of the British Government may be justified. Who could, then, have thought that the assignment of the protection of Bosnia and Herzegovina to Austria would become a boomerang to British statesmen ; or that a German-led Austria would prove to be the true danger in the Balkan States ? At this time of day the Convention, under which Great Britain entered into a defensive alliance with Turkey, to guard her against a further attack from Russia, seems futile enough ; but statesmen are not to be condemned because they only see what is immediately before them.

Moreover, another side of the question did not perhaps receive the consideration which it deserved. Morier was by no means alone in holding that, under certain eventualities, the presence of the Russians at Constantinople might not be an un-mixed calamity for British interests. Whilst Great Britain possessed sea-power in the Mediterranean and had control of Egypt and the road to India, such presence might afford a valuable pledge, from the British standpoint, in the case of Russian aggressions in the Far East.

Lord Beaconsfield was received with acclamations when he returned from the Berlin Congress, bringing 'peace with honour.' But shrewd observers might

have noted that not a little of his past sayings and doings had shocked the consciences of the British middle and working classes ; which, under democracy, cannot be done with impunity. Speaking generally, the classes were on the side of the Government, the masses were with Gladstone ; not because they were necessarily more moral, but because they acted more under the immediate moral impulse. The result was disaster to the Conservative administration and the return to power of the Gladstone Ministry. In the matter of Egypt and of Gordon, with which we are not here concerned, and again in his narrow escape from plunging into war with Russia over the Pendjeh incident, Gladstone was to show that something more is required for the carrying through of a wise foreign policy than a general faith in the necessity of righteousness and a settled conviction that the cause of righteousness is identical with one's own line of conduct. Gladstone began his period of office by penning an apology to Austria for his description of her ;<sup>1</sup> and in October, 1880, Granville ruefully confessed : ' The Concert of Europe is gone to the devil.'<sup>2</sup> Still Lord Odo Russell could claim with regard to Greece ' that the cession of a beautiful province like Thessaly by one country to the other without bloodshed . . . does the greatest honour to the concerted diplomacy of Europe, inaugurated and led by Her Majesty's Government with so much ability, tact and patience.'<sup>3</sup> Lord Odo Russell (who became Lord Amphill in 1880) was a very able man, but he did not perhaps

<sup>1</sup> Fitz Maurice, *op. cit.* vol ii. p. 206.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 223.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 231.

fully grasp Bismarck's policy of setting France and England by the ears. No doubt Bismarck would have gladly accepted Great Britain as an ally, had she been willing to pay the price of agreeing to preserve Alsace-Lorraine to Germany. In 1879 Lord Salisbury had welcomed the defensive alliance between Germany and Austria as 'glad tidings of great joy'; but no British statesman was willing to become the possible catspaw of Bismarck; and in this state of things, in his anxiety regarding 'a Russo-alliance and an invasion of Germany from the north and from the west, which, if it did not break up the German Empire, would certainly ruin Germany for years to come,'<sup>1</sup> Bismarck found himself driven to measures which, indirectly, were hostile to England. It may have been their misfortune rather than their fault, but assuredly the record of the Liberal Government's foreign policy during the years 1880-1885 was not a brilliant one.

Nor were their Conservative successors more fortunate. It may be that a kind of *entente* with Germany, secured by conciliatory behaviour regarding Heligoland and East Africa obtained for England a half-contemptuous toleration of her informal protectorate of Egypt; but, in truth, the European position of Great Britain was one of isolation, 'splendid' or otherwise; and in the grouping of the Powers which was taking place, such isolation portended grave dangers.

Moreover, it must be confessed that there were at this time signs of a slackening of the resolution of Great Britain to support Belgian neutrality. In

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 212.



## 24 BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY IN EUROPE

1887 Sir Charles Dilke contributed a remarkable series of articles on the European situation to the *Fortnightly Review*. In the first of these he put forward the question, whether or not, in the event of a violation of Belgian neutrality by Germany in a war between France and Germany, England would come to the aid of Belgium. In fairness we must remember the special circumstances of the time. To ninety-nine out of every hundred Englishmen Russia seemed to be the natural enemy ; and even so level-headed an observer as Sir C. Dilke believed that, sooner or later, a war between England and Russia was inevitable. Meanwhile, in Madagascar, in the New Hebrides, in Egypt and in Newfoundland, causes of friction had been, or were, at work, and any moment the rash behaviour of some French official might have succeeded in precipitating war. On the other hand, though Bismarck might affect a policy of pinpricks where liberal England was concerned, it is probable that, throughout his political life he considered war between England and Germany to be unthinkable ; nor at this time had the tendencies come to the fore, which were to make England a stone of stumbling to Germany in its road to world-supremacy.

In this state of things, when Sir C. Dilke's question was asked, though there was, naturally, no reply from official sources, the unofficial answer was in the highest degree unsatisfactory.

'In January last,' wrote Sir C. Dilke, 'there was the gravest doubt in my mind as to what would be the response that the questions asked by me with regard to Belgium would produce ; I did not know

whether or not England meant to fight for Belgium, but I did feel certain that England ought to know her mind upon the point, and I thought it right that marked attention should be directed to a matter so important. A great discussion followed, but that discussion has been all one way, and my questions of last January now read like some of the speculations of ancient history. The principal party organ of the Conservatives of England has declared that our intervention in support of Belgium, which up to last year was assumed as a matter of course by both parties in the state, "would be not only insane but impossible." It has been suggested by "Diplomaticus" and the *Standard* that we are to allow Belgium to be temporarily utilised "as a right of way," and the *National Review* has endorsed the suggestion of "Diplomaticus," and told us that "it might be possible to obtain a guarantee that the territory of Belgium, if traversed for railway purposes, should not be permanently violated, and that, at the end of the struggle, the neutrality and independence of that country should be religiously respected." It is hardly necessary to argue seriously upon the religious respect which the neutrality of Belgium would receive after the non-permanent violation. My belief remains as strong as when I wrote in January and February last that, when once the neutrality is violated, the independence of Belgium is gone. It is the Belgians, who, when Germany and France fall out, if the struggle is a long or doubtful one, will have to pay the piper. The erection of Belgian fortresses on the Meuse, and the proposed adoption of personal service . . . has

caused a great accumulation of books and papers upon my table, but I put them aside into their drawer with the feeling that a question which was worth arguing at length six months ago has now been solved in England.' He then goes on to discuss the measures proposed to be taken by the Belgians for their own defence, and adds: 'They will be safer in their own hands than the outcome of the recent discussion shows them to have been in ours. The *Morning Post*, in writing upon this question, has used these words: ". . . It is not likely that we should allow treaties to be violated with impunity without a protest. People may remark that protests are a very poor sort of compensation. But it will be far more natural and far more dignified for us to protest against a violation of Belgian territory than to look complacently on while such Powers as France and Germany march their armies across Belgium; satisfying ourselves with the assurance that at the close of the conflict the territory of Belgium shall remain intact as before." "Diplomaticus" and the *Standard* would have us to come to an understanding to give the right of way, while the *Morning Post* would have us protest against its use. I do not myself think the Belgians, who are after all the people most concerned, would see much difference.

'The response to my first chapter has been virtually unanimous, and it is clear that my question, whether we intend to fight for Belgium according to our treaty obligations, or to throw treaty obligations to the wind, under some convenient pretext, is already answered. On the other hand, it is now

plain that Belgium desires, although still in a rather tepid way, to preserve her neutrality, and through it her independence. She is gradually learning the lesson that she will have to preserve it by the power to give hard knocks. Unfortunately we have misled Belgium for many years. The highest modern strategic opinion upon the existing system of defences in Belgium, written only in 1884, runs as follows: "All has been sacrificed to the intention to afford a landing-place to the army of succour to be furnished by a great naval power. It is England that is meant, for the neutrality and independence of Belgium have no more firm defender than Great Britain." This was written three years ago when a Liberal Government was in power; but it could not be repeated now, although we are under the rule of the party which is supposed to be the more inclined to interfere abroad. Treaties, no doubt, die out in time. The treaty of 1839 with regard to Belgium is after all much older than the treaty of the 21st November, 1855, with regard to Sweden. France and England would now think it an insane idea that they should attempt to preserve the integrity of Sweden against Russia, and similarly to all appearance, thinks England with regard to Belgium now.<sup>1</sup>

I have quoted Sir C. Dilke's words, because they represent the contemporary view of a singularly level-headed observer. At the same time it is manifest that he was wrong in interpreting a passing

<sup>1</sup> *The Present Position of European Politics*, pp. 321-4. For text of treaty respecting Sweden, see Hertslett, *The Map of Europe by Treaty*, vol. ii. p. 1242.

phase of despondency, due to special circumstances, as a permanent change of mind ; and there is no evidence that either British statesmen or the British electorate deliberately at any time intended to be false to their treaty obligations, though it is undoubtedly true that throughout the whole history successive British Governments showed an extraordinary levity in forgetting the old truth that *qui veut le fin, veut les moyens*.

In 1890 Bismarck fell from power ; and the helm of State in Germany was grasped by a young and inexperienced ruler, fervently convinced of his own capacity for rule, and determined to play a great part in history. Instead of the wise caution of Bismarck, who was content to aim at the consolidation of United Germany, the Emperor William soared into the empyrean of a Germany possessing world-supremacy by sea as well as by land—the end to be obtained by peaceful means, if possible, but, somehow or other, to be obtained. On one side of his ambitions England blocked the way. Whatever may have been the inner history of the telegram addressed to Kruger on January 3, 1897, by the Kaiser, with reference to the Jameson raid, congratulating him on having maintained the independence of his country against foreign aggression ‘without appealing to the help of friendly Powers,’ at least it threw valuable light on the workings of his mind. The matter is still in obscurity ; but it seems tolerably certain that informal negotiations went on between Germany, France and Russia, at the time of the South African War, with the object of abating British naval supremacy. When the

negotiations came to nothing, it was natural that the different parties should each lay the responsibility for them on the other's shoulder ; but it is probable that the rock on which they foundered was the impossibility of any recognition by France of the loss as irrevocable of Alsace and Lorraine.

The end of the nineteenth century has been chosen for the terminus of this volume, because, after this, a new horizon opened, with new methods of policy, rendered inevitable by new menacing dangers. In the face of a common danger England, no less than France and Russia, forgot minor differences ; and the gradual *rapprochement* took place which was to bear good fruit in the Great War that broke out in 1914.

Thus, from the side of self-interest, it was shown that the policy of isolation, so dear to a particular school of politician, was proved impossible. But from a higher point of view was it not well that this should be so ? For better or for worse (unfortunately, in the past too often for worse) the great World-Powers form, for certain purposes, an organised whole ; and have each their corresponding obligations. For nations, no less than for individuals, it is the path of shame to echo the base cry ' am I my brother's keeper ? ' Somehow or other the Concert of Europe and of the World must be carried on. We have seen how in the past, in spite of mistakes and failures, England has, upon the whole, stood for respect for the plighted word and for the interests of the small nations. Is there not good reason to hope that, under more favourable conditions and with a clearer insight into facts, the

new democracy may be able to work still more loyally on behalf of these good objects? The question is often asked—whether a democracy is capable of Empire? A still more pertinent question is—whether any form of government except a democracy, unless it be a pure autocracy, is capable of carrying through a great national war? In all previous wars England has fought under a kind of unacknowledged limited liability; the governing classes being held back by the fear that they might not have the people behind them in their war measures. Only with Labour leaders in the Ministry, and with the strength of labour interests openly recognised, was it possible to set up a system of compulsory military service in a country where life-long traditions and prejudices stood in the way.

But if, by appealing to an educated democracy, it has been possible to obtain results on the military side unknown before, may we not hope that the international problems of peace, if confronted with the same courage and the same persistency, may also find their solution at the hands of a democracy aiming at the right? so that at length the vision of the much-tried patriarch may be realised, and the nations of the earth come to recognise in their mutual relations that ‘the fear of the Lord that is wisdom : and to depart from evil is understanding.’

## CHAPTER II

RELIGION, TRADE AND PRIVATE GREED; THEIR  
INFLUENCE UPON ENGLISH FOREIGN POLICY.  
1570-1688

LAMENTABLY as practice lagged behind theory, the medieval world possessed methods of solving international difficulties no longer available. The Holy Roman Empire may have been a phantom; but phantoms have, as has well been said, their importance; whilst the Catholic Church provided a final Court of Appeal whose judgments none might question. Different as were the results from what might have been, still in such action as the settlement of possible controversy between the two Colonial Empires of Spain and Portugal we recognise the power of the Church. Unhappily Rome too often bartered its position as the supreme head of the Christian world for the mess of pottage of territorial dominion; and thus lost the reputation of impartiality which was essential to the maintenance of its claims.

Be this as it may, with the Reformation there came an inevitable change. The countries that shook themselves free from the authority of Rome



in spiritual matters naturally could not complain if the Church sided with their adversaries. Nor was a new Court of Appeal available to take the place of the past. For a time it seemed as though the energies of Europe might be exhausted in a Holy War directed against heresy. Assuredly it was this idea which dictated English foreign policy at the accession of Queen Elizabeth. Philip II. of Spain had adopted a conciliatory policy on his marriage with Mary, and was ready and willing to continue such a policy had Elizabeth submitted to his advances. But when once it was plain that Protestant England had its own aims to advance, and had no intention of sheltering under Spanish tutelage, henceforth she became to Spain a danger to be suppressed at all hazards. S. R. Gardiner was a historian of extreme caution and moderation, but it is thus that he describes Philip's policy: 'If Philip II. had been able to carry out his schemes, he would have re-established the old religion by the prowess of the Spanish armies, and by the intrigues of which he held the thread as he sat at his desk at the Escorial. The Pope would once more have been looked up to as the head of an undivided Church. By his side would have stood, in all the prominence of conscious superiority, the King of Spain, realising in his person all and more than all that in the Middle Ages had been ascribed by jurists and statesmen to the chief of the Holy Roman Empire, the lay pillar of the edifice of Catholic Unity. Kings would have existed only by his sufferance. Political independence and religious independence would have been stifled on every side.

At last perhaps the symbol would have followed the reality, and the imperial crown would have rested on the brows of the true heir of the house of Austria, the Champion of the Church, the Master of the treasures of the West, the Captain of armies whose unserried ranks and unbroken discipline would have driven in headlong rout the feudal chivalry which in bygone centuries had followed the Ottos and the Fredericks through the passes of the Alps.' <sup>1</sup>

It was the business of Elizabeth to prevent this consummation, and how successfully the work was achieved forms one of the best-known chapters in English history. Historical parallels are generally misleading, but undoubtedly the conduct of operations by the Great Queen closely resembled that of the Roman General who, by a policy of delay, saved the Roman State. By encouraging private enterprise and by husbanding public resources, Elizabeth was able to bring about a condition of affairs under which, when Philip finally struck his great blow by the despatch of the Armada, it was not merely the forces of nature that caused his undoing. With the defeat of the Armada, the hopes of Spain for a world supremacy were for ever shattered, though it took time for the lesson to be realised.

Meanwhile a new and very different rival to English interests was appearing upon the scene. English privateers had laboured as much for their own interests in the riches of the East and of the West as for lowering the flag of Spain. To their disgust they found that a new rival was

<sup>1</sup> *The History of England 1603-1642*, vol. i. p. 204.

surpassing them in this trade competition. 'The United Provinces,' Mun wrote, 'are like a fair bird suited with goodly borrowed plumes; but if every fowl should take his feather this bird would rest near naked.' Again: 'Since they have cast off the yoke of Spanish slavery, how wonderfully are they improved in all humane policy! What great means have they obtained to defend their liberty against the power of so great an enemy? and is not all this performed by their continued industry in the trade of merchandise? are not their provinces the magazines and store-houses of wares for most places of Christendom, whereby their wealth, shipping, mariners, arts, people, and thereby the publicque revenues and excises are grown to a wonderful height? If we compare the times of their subjection to their present estate, they seem not the same people . . . it seems a wonder to the world that such a small country, not fully so big as two of our best shires, having little natural wealth, victuals, timber or other necessary ammunitions, either for war or peace, should notwithstanding possess their all in such extraordinary plenty, that besides their own wants (which are very great) they can and do likewise serve and sell to other Princes ships, ordnance, cordage, powder, shot and what not, which by their industrious trading they gather from all quarters of the world; in which courses they are not less injurious to supplant others (especially the English) than they are careful to strengthen themselves.' <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *England's Treasure by Foreign Trade*, by T. Mun (Economic Classics), pp. 101-2.

With such a rival already in the field it seems clear that English interests demanded the peace of 1604, for concluding which James I. has been often blamed. That peace, it must be carefully noted, contained no betrayal of Dutch interests, and it is satisfactory that the first of modern English treaties was based upon the recognition of the sacredness of the plighted word, a recognition which was to be the keynote of subsequent English policy. When the Spanish Commissioner invited a mutual promise from the English Government not to assist those who were in rebellion against the authority of either sovereign, Cecil refused to discuss the question whether or not the Dutch were rebels, but boldly affirmed 'that the Contracts which were made by the deceased virtuous and pious Princes. . . with those that call themselves by the name of the United Provinces were done upon very just and good cause.'<sup>1</sup> It was in vain that Spain sought to render impossible the service of English volunteers in the forces of the United Provinces. 'His Majesty,' wrote Cecil, 'promised neither to punish nor to stay, but only that he will not consent—a word of which you know the latitude as well as I.' 'The articles were so reformed as should neither import any such public revocation, nor to restrain the going of voluntaries thither.'<sup>2</sup>

The Peace of 1604, like the Treaty of Ghent of 1815, was an indecisive document, which left the main bone of contention still at issue. The Spanish Commissioners tried to obtain an acknowledgment of the illegality of the English trade with the Indies,

<sup>1</sup> Gardiner, *op. cit.* vol. i. p. 209.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 210.

but the utmost they could obtain was the promise of a Proclamation forbidding English subjects to trade with places actually in the occupation of the Spanish Government, on condition that Spain would withdraw all pretensions to exclude them from trading with the independent natives. This condition, however, was unacceptable, so that the whole question was ignored in the treaty. Meanwhile the Spaniards were warned 'that our people were a warlike nation, and having been accustomed to make purchases (*i.e.* prizes) on the seas, would not better be reduced than by allowing them free liberty of trade.' 'If Spain insisted,' comments Gardiner, 'that there should be no peace beyond the line, it would be better to leave her to reap the fruits of a policy which before long would give birth to the buccaneers.'<sup>1</sup>

Notwithstanding the sullen silence with which the Peace was received as a betrayal of national interests and of the Dutch allies it was, as we have seen, in consonance with true policy. At the same time there was nothing in it to allay—it tended rather to aggravate—the new danger arising from Dutch rivalry. It is impossible, I think, to read the history of the time without recognising that the Dutch Wars of the seventeenth century were no mere accidents, but the inevitable outcome of deep-seated causes. But consider the scandal that was caused by this division in the Protestant household. It is easy for us now, from the safe security of the judgment seat of history, to recognise that Spanish power was on the wane, and that imperial policy

<sup>1</sup> Gardiner, *op. cit.* vol. i. pp. 211-12

must be forged anew in the workshop of imperial needs ; but old pieties and traditions die hard, and it was a difficult task to rid men of the notion that the field of foreign policy must for all time remain an Armageddon between light and darkness, between the Reformation and the Whore of Babylon.

No doubt it was the recognition of all this which led to the strange proposal for a Union between England and the Netherlands which had otherwise so little in its favour. According to an intercepted letter given in Thurloe : ‘ Our Generall (Cromwell) made a long harangue to them (the Dutch ambassadors) offering to joyne with them as one man agaynst all the ungodly in the world.’ They were to have ‘ the same terms Ireland and Scotland had of us, viz. that the Dutch should have men of their nation sit in consell with us as we would have with them ; and that all ports, harbours and trade should be alyke each to other. But they refusing this I know not what they would be at, unless they would be our masters.’<sup>1</sup> But to the Netherlanders, still growing daily by leaps and bounds in wealth and prosperity, there was nothing to attract in the English proposal ‘ that the two Commonwealths may be confederated friends, joined and allied together for the defence and preservation of the liberties and freedom of the people of each ’ ;<sup>2</sup> and so the course of mutual jealousy and distrust went on unchecked in peace no less than in war, until it found its quietus in the accession of a Dutch

<sup>1</sup> *A Collection of the State Papers*, by John Thurloe, vol. i. p. 386.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 182.

king to the English throne and the gradual exhaustion of Dutch strength in the struggle with its better-endowed rival.

That the desire for union with the Dutch was no fantastic dream of some theorist, but was the outcome of the political faith of practical statesmen, is well shown by the explanation of his foreign policy given by Cromwell on September 17th, 1656. The passage is long, but nothing could so vividly bring before us an extinct mode of thought: 'Why truly your great enemy is the Spaniard. He is a natural enemy. He is naturally so. He is naturally so throughout—by reason of that enmity that is in him against whatsoever is of God. . . . With this King and State, I say, you are at present in hostility. We put you into this hostility. . . . You could not get an honest or honourable peace from him. It was sought by the Long Parliament; it was not attained. It could not be attained with honour and honesty. . . . And the Spaniard is not only our enemy accidentally, but he is providentially so; God having in his wisdom disposed it so to be, when we made a breach with the Spanish nation long ago.' He then recapitulated from his own point of view the past history, and continued: 'Thus a State which you can neither have peace with nor reason from, that is the State with which you have enmity at this time, and against which you are engaged. And give me leave to say this unto you, because it is truth, and most men know it, that the Long Parliament did endeavour, but could not obtain satisfaction from the Spaniard all the time they sat. For their messenger was murdered,

and when they asked satisfaction for the blood of your poor people shed in the West Indies and for the wrongs done elsewhere ; when they asked liberty of conscience for your people who traded thither, satisfaction in none of these things would be given, but was denied. . . . Now if this be so, why truly then here is some little foundation laid to justify the war that has been entered upon with the Spaniard. And not only so ; but the plain truth of it is, make any peace with any State that is Popish and subjected to the determination of Rome and of the Pope himself, and you are bound and they are loose. . . . That Peace is but to be kept so long as the Pope saith Amen to it.' That such reasoning was becoming out of date was shown by the fact that Cromwell was himself co-operating with a Roman Catholic Power, France. Cromwell's explanation with regard to this is singularly lame. 'We have not now to do with any Popish State except France ; and it is certain that *they* do not think themselves under such a tie to the Pope ; but think themselves at liberty to perform honesties with nations in agreement with them, and protest against the obligation of such a thing as that, of breaking your word at the Pope's bidding. *They* are able to give us an explicit answer to anything reasonably demanded of them ; and there is no other Popish State, we can speak of, save this only, but will break their promise or keep it as they please upon these grounds, being under the lash of the Pope, to be by him determined and made to decide.' <sup>1</sup> But Cromwell gives no reason why France stands

<sup>1</sup> *Cromwell's Letters and Speeches*, vol. iv. pp. 180-184.



on this different footing from other nations. In truth wars for religion were becoming an anachronism, and in the new formation of alliances religious considerations counted for little ; though even as late as 1673 we find Coventry connecting in argument religious with political questions. ‘ In former days,’ he said, ‘ Spain was more rigorous in religion, now it is France. Spain now assists Holland. France in the last war would conclude no capitulation with any town unless the priests were considered in it. It becomes thereby powerful among the Catholics ; and we read in the French Gazette that the Papal Nuncio has received the order not to oppose the progress of the French arms.’<sup>1</sup>

It is unnecessary for our present purpose to attempt to thread the tortuous maze of Charles II.’s foreign policy. The explanation of that policy is well given by the great historian Ranke. ‘ He was capable of proposing offensive alliances simultaneously to the three neighbouring Powers, to the Dutch against France, to the French against Spain and Holland, to the Spaniards against France to the detriment of Holland ; but in these propositions two fundamental views always recur—demands for money, supplies, and assurance of world-wide commerce to England.’<sup>2</sup> It must always be remembered that the same King whose rôle was that of the bribed tributary of France was the active promoter of the commercial and colonial interests of his

<sup>1</sup> *Hist. of England principally in the Seventeenth Century*, by L. von Ranke (Engl. Trans.), vol. iii. p. 548.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 471-2.

country. Even when Charles was preparing to submit himself to Louis XIV. and to Rome, he made it a condition that France should help England to obtain the possession of the countries and places in South America. Besides this England was to receive Minorca and Ostend.<sup>1</sup>

But while Charles II. was sincerely desirous of promoting English interests so far as they were compatible with his own, his most pressing anxiety was how to make himself secure from the interference of Parliament, and to achieve this he saw no other way than to accept the money of Louis XIV. Dependence upon foreign support, however, was a game at which two parties could play. Whilst Charles was becoming the creature of France, influential Members of Parliament were forming a close connexion with his nephew the Prince of Orange. Nor was Charles himself altogether opposed to such a connexion. When the office of Captain-General and Admiral of the United Netherlands was made hereditary in the Prince's male line, Charles was willing that his brother, the Duke of York, should give his daughter in marriage to the Prince of Orange. Such a marriage, the King believed, would be a security for the Duke of York himself and for the throne generally. The French indeed were quick to see how fatal to the ideals of Louis XIV. was the proposal; but Charles was not accustomed to look far ahead, and the warnings were disregarded.

The foreign policy of James II. was of necessity a replica of that of his brother. Even less than Charles, who had successfully favoured English

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 497.

expansion, commercial and colonial, was James in his heart a traitor to English interests. His work on behalf of the navy proves the contrary. But distrusted and disliked by his own people, separated from the majority by the insurmountable barrier of an alien religion, James had no alternative but to continue dependent upon France. In attempting, however, to reconcile the claims of an imperative though narrow conscience with the Protestant *via media* of the England of his day, James was compassing his own fall, and his removal opened the way to a more determined, as well as more costly, English foreign policy.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE RESISTANCE TO FRENCH WORLD-SUPREMACY ; ANGLO-FRENCH *RAPPROCHEMENTS*. 1689-1789.

WITH the coming of William of Orange, who, crowned King of England, along with his wife Mary, embodied the parliamentary character of the monarchy, begins the history of modern English foreign policy. Prince William had already risen to the position of representative and active champion of the idea of the balance of power which the great German historian recognised to be 'necessary to the existence of the States of Europe.'<sup>1</sup> But with the sword of England thrown into the scales, that idea could be much more effectively and successfully vindicated. Still the military strength of France was very great, and the provisional settlement of Ryswick (1697) was in the nature of a draw. William obtained, however, from Louis XIV. the separate undertaking that he would no longer support the Stuart claim to the throne of England, an undertaking of no little importance with regard to English domestic politics. 'England,' Bishop Burnet informs us, 'and the States had no other

<sup>1</sup> Ranke, *op. cit.* vol. iv. p. 384.

concern in the Treaty but to secure their allies and to settle a Barrier in the Netherlands ; and this object was, at least to a very great extent, attained. William III. by this Peace concluded the great design of putting a stop to the progress of the French arms which he had constantly pursued from his first appearance on the stage in the year 1672. There was not one of the Allies who complained that he had been forgot by him or wronged in the Treaty ; nor had the desire of having his title universally acknowledged raised any impatience in him, or made him run into this Peace with any indecent haste. The terms of it were still too much to the advantage of France ; but the length and charge of the war had so exhausted the Allies that the King saw the necessity of accepting the best conditions that could be got. It is true that France was more harassed by the war, yet the arbitrary frame of that Government made this King the master of the whole wealth of his people, and the war was managed on both sides, between them and us, with this visible difference, that every man who dealt with the French King was ruined by it ; whereas, among us, every man grew rich by his dealings with the King ; and it was not easy to see how this could either be prevented or punished. The regard that is shewn to the Members of Parliament among us makes that few abuses can be enquired into or discovered ; and the King found his reign grow so unacceptable to his people, by the continuance of the war, that he saw the necessity of coming to a peace. The States were under the same pressure ; they were heavier charged and

suffered more by the war than the English. The French, indeed, got nothing by a war which they had most perfidiously begun.’<sup>1</sup>

But easy as it now is to recognise that the balance of European power was an English interest and that the predominance of France would have threatened ruin to England, at the time men’s thoughts in England were mainly directed elsewhere. Hostility to the principle of a standing army and distrust of a foreign King, whose Dutch interests might lead him to throw away the benefits obtained by England’s insular position, counted for more in the decisions of Parliament than deep-laid schemes of statesmanship. In this state of things, however, as has so often happened in English history, the blundering of the adversary atoned for domestic short-sightedness. The English nation was willing to overlook the violation of the Partition Treaties, to which Louis XIV. had given his solemn assent, and to condone his acceptance of the bequest of the Spanish throne, made under the will of the King of Spain, to the younger son of the Dauphin. The news, indeed, was like a blow in the face to William. Although it did not move him from his wonted outward composure he wrote to his friend Hensius: ‘Might I but follow my own instinct I would call on all the Courts of Europe to raise an energetic opposition. But I feel humiliated at not being able to set them a good example in the matter.’<sup>2</sup> In fact the terms of the Second Partition Treaty had been most unpopular

<sup>1</sup> *Bishop Burnet’s History of his own Time*, vol. ii. pp. 201-2.

<sup>2</sup> *Ranke, op. cit.* vol. v. p. 238.

in England. By securing for France ascendancy in the Mediterranean it seemed to threaten the maritime position of England. At the same time it was generally recognised that the division between Spain and France must be fully maintained, and no opportunity given to the French to injure the commerce of England, either in the Spanish Peninsula or in the West Indies. 'On this point all were agreed. If this condition were observed many were indifferent as to what else might happen on the Continent; yet all were not so satisfied; more experienced persons added a second condition—that the French King should not presume to encroach upon the Netherlands.'<sup>1</sup> How serious the situation there had become was soon to be demonstrated. The maintenance of the Dutch garrisons in the Spanish Netherlands seemed indispensable for their security; but now Louis XIV. could coolly write: 'The Spanish fortresses in the Netherlands are full of foreign troops; if the Spaniards need any support in ejecting them, the help they might desire would be forthwith at their command.'<sup>2</sup>

'William III. saw the blow coming and yet thought it better not to resist. He clearly foresaw, as is plain from one of his letters, the serious loss it would entail on England—it was equivalent to handing the Netherlands over to France—and at the first moment it might perhaps have been possible for the garrisons to make themselves complete masters of the fortresses and to defend them with success; but then he said, if this were done, war would break out; and for that they were not prepared.

<sup>1</sup> Ranke, *op. cit.* vol. v. p. 239.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 243.

‘ Sick at heart, chagrined and fully persuaded that war must come, William nevertheless at this moment receded a step ; what he could not prevent he would not resist. Without hesitation Louis XIV. pushed forward. . . . The French troops which appeared on the 6th of February, 1701, before the seven fortresses (amongst which were Luxemburg, Mons and Charleroi) were at once admitted into them ; the Dutch garrisons had already received instructions to withdraw without resistance if this were done. Louis XIV. did not hesitate to send French troops also to occupy the seaports Ostend and Nieuport.

‘ Hitherto the Spanish Netherlands had been meant to be a barrier against France ; and under the idea that Spain and France were to continue to be completely distinct Powers, there had been some thought of strengthening the Dutch Garrisons with English troops : but how utterly different had the position of affairs become in a moment ! These strongholds, for the possession of which there had been a struggle with the French King for half a century, that is for the whole term of his reign, now as good as fell into his hands without resistance, and became so many points from which Holland might be attacked.’ <sup>1</sup>

So far all had gone well with French policy ; but now a blunder was made which at once changed the whole situation. James II. died in exile in March 1701, and Louis at once recognised his infant son as lawful successor to the throne of England. Already public opinion in England had been not

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 242-5.



a little stirred by the rumour that the South American harbours were to be closed against England and Holland, whilst they were left open to French traders. A general panic took place, and there was on all sides a feeling of unrest. It was in this state of things that the news arrived that the King of France had chosen to hold of none effect the solemn acts and engagements of the English Parliament and nation. The insult to William was a personal insult to each one of his subjects. Tories anxious to prove that they were not Jacobites at heart, vied with Whigs in clamouring for war. Commercial influences were also powerful in the same direction. The publication in France of ordinances directed against the import of English manufactures showed what was to be expected should Spain come under the sway of France. 'It was thought that in that case they would neither get the silver from the galleons nor the Spanish wool, still indispensable in England; not merely would the trade with the Spanish Colonies be lost, but English ships would be entirely excluded from the Mediterranean.'<sup>1</sup>

When things had reached this point, the death of William, which at another time might have been a veritable misfortune, made no difference to the course of events. Indeed, by giving full play to the transcendent military abilities of Marlborough it proved a blessing in disguise. For it was not merely as General that Marlborough was able to replace William. He was able also to carry on his work as diplomatist. We all know how on the plains of Blenheim (1704) a limit was set once for

<sup>1</sup> Ranke, *op. cit.* vol. v. p. 281.

all to the supremacy of Louis XIV. on the continent. Through the battle of Ramillies (1706) the fortresses of the Netherlands fell once more into the hands of the Allies, and the battle of Turin decided the fate of Upper Italy. Much controversy has taken place over the Peace of Utrecht. No doubt the motives of the Tories in the negotiations of that Peace did not solely regard English interests. They wished for peace because only by peace could they shake themselves free from the yoke of their enemy Marlborough. Nor can it be maintained that the results were altogether commensurate with the victories won in the War. Still, when we realise that the settlement at Utrecht meant the death-blow to French ambitions in so far as the Austrian Netherlands became a buffer State between France and Holland, and Dutch garrisons protected the barrier fortresses, and that the trade interests of England in the South Seas were carefully assisted, we cannot look upon the treaty as a betrayal of the cause of England. 'After a bloody contest of many years,' writes Ranke, 'the Peace of Utrecht was a return to pretty much the same agreement as had been taken into consideration in the Partition treaties before it. Spain and the Indies remained in the hands of the French prince, Italy was assigned to Austria, Holland was protected by a boundary, though a diminished one, England obtained a firm position in the Mediterranean, just as William III. had proposed in his first conference with Tallard.' (In addition to this, the Netherlands were assigned to the Austrian Empire.) 'The state of the world, however, was

not thus made exactly the old one over again. Louis XIV. had been conquered in the interval. If the English did not utterly overthrow him, that was only because they were not united among themselves, and the maintenance of the Bourbon power seemed necessary to the Tories, in order to prevent the Whigs from obtaining the supremacy in England.' <sup>1</sup>

But if Louis XIV. had been indeed conquered and his pretensions to world supremacy finally overthrown, was there any necessity to continue a bloody and expensive war for objects which were not essentially British? Upon the material side, it must be remembered that, besides Gibraltar and Minorca, which were retained as the fruits of victory, the Peace of Utrecht gave Great Britain Nova Scotia, the Hudson Bay and its Territories, and Newfoundland; that it recognised British supremacy over the Iroquois; that it gave the English special privileges in the Spanish South Seas through the *Assiento*, or right to furnish the Spanish South American dominions with slaves and to carry on with them a general trade to a limited extent. (It may be thought that these things were really evils in disguise as tending to future war, but such, assuredly, was not the public opinion of the time.) Turning to moral considerations, we are told that the Peace was a betrayal of the interests of Great Britain's Allies. But if the condition was once fulfilled that the Crowns of France and Spain should never be combined, it was surely not necessary that Great Britain should prolong the war inde-

<sup>1</sup> Ranke, *op. cit.* vol. v. p. 345.

finitely to secure that Spain should be an appanage of the Austrian Hapsbergs. Again, with regard to the Dutch, it was of course essential that Great Britain should not make peace without securing for them a sufficiently strong barrier to resist possible attack from France ; but this did not imply that the Netherlands were to become virtually a Dutch vassal, or that the system of barrier towns should be organised in a manner detrimental to British interests. Because the Whig Ministry had made an improvident bargain with regard to the Barriers in 1709,<sup>1</sup> it did not follow that their successors should adopt their mistakes. Nor was there any reason why Great Britain, who had borne far more than her fair share of the burdens of the War, should be under an obligation to share with Holland whatever commercial benefits her labours had secured from Spain. No doubt mean motives were at work. But if the Tories wanted peace mainly because thereby they might humiliate and confound their enemy, Marlborough, the Dutch no less sought their own private ends in playing the game of the Whig opposition ; whilst they were quite ready to make a separate peace with the French had the opportunity occurred. The conduct of the British General Ormonde, in ceasing to co-operate with the Allies, was a strong measure ; but it seems to have been justified by a policy on the part of the Allies that can only be described as one of blackmail. It is

<sup>1</sup> Under the Barrier Treaty of 1709 the Dutch obtained the right to hold a number of fortresses in the Netherlands 'to an extent which surpassed all expectations,' in return for guaranteeing the succession of the House of Hanover. (Ranke, *op. cit.* vol. v. pp. 339-40.)

noteworthy that in a treaty negotiated by Tory statesmen, the recognition by France of the Hanoverian succession took a prominent place, and it is difficult to say how Great Britain would have gained by continuing the war.

In addition to the points already mentioned the undertaking to destroy Dunkirk, as a French fortified position, was an apparent gain to Great Britain. Dunkirk as an English possession had been the heritage of Cromwell's co-operation with France against Spain. Its secret sale to France had been one of the most damning counts in the indictment of Lord Clarendon. At the same time it is very doubtful how far English interests were really benefited by a continental possession such as Dunkirk. Cromwell had supported it as a bulwark of Protestantism amidst the Catholic Provinces ; but the Restoration Government had no wish that the Church of England should be identified with Continental Protestantism ; and no doubt Clarendon honestly believed that the £130,000 spent on the Dunkirk Garrison would be better spent at home against possible insurrections. Still it was one thing that Dunkirk should cease to be British, another that it should be a French place of arms threatening England. Accordingly the undertaking to raze its fortifications was a distinct triumph for British diplomacy ; though in fact the undertaking was very imperfectly fulfilled.

The chief change made in the map of Western Europe was that the Spanish Netherlands now fell under the sway of the Emperor. Inasmuch as the Emperor had no fleet, this arrangement was

most beneficial to British interests. The people who continued to suffer were the unfortunate inhabitants of the Netherlands. In the past, the short-sighted jealousies of their Spanish masters had forbidden their having any share in the American trade, and, at the Peace of Westphalia (1648), the Dutch had jealously insisted that the mouth of the Scheldt should be closed to their shipping. The Peace of Utrecht made no difference in this respect, except that the guarantee of Great Britain was added to that of the other Powers to maintain this state of things. When, under the new régime, the Emperor, Charles VI., sought to develop a new trade by means of the Ostend Company, he found his efforts unavailing against the steady pressure of the Maritime Powers.

The accession to the British throne of the House of Hanover made an inevitable change in British foreign policy. Hitherto, except so far as the impecuniosity or treachery of kings or the ambition or party exigencies of politicians had deflected its course—and the exception is a big one—English interests had decided English policy. But now the King of England was also the King of a German principality; and, as such, more watchful of Hanoverian than of British interests. The first two Georges were almost wholly ignorant of English; and George I. and his ministers held their communications in dog Latin. It is impossible, without entering into great detail, to show the part played by Hanoverian interests in the foreign policy of the time.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mr. J. F. Chance, however, writes: 'The politics of Hanover became subordinate to those of England. True that George

As an example we may note the acquisition of Bremen and Verden by Hanover in 1716. These places, situated between the territories of the House of Brunswick and the sea, had been ceded to Sweden by the Peace of Westphalia. Having been conquered by Denmark, they were ceded to George I., as Elector of Hanover, on the condition of paying £150,000, and declaring war against Sweden. In consequence of this treaty a British fleet was sent to the Baltic. The Pretender proclaimed, 'by taking possession of the Duchy of Bremen, in violation of the public faith, a door is opened by the Usurper to let in an inundation of foreigners from abroad, and to reduce these nations to a state of dependence on one of the most inconsiderable provinces of the Empire.'<sup>1</sup> It is fair, however, to note that Horace Walpole, Sir Robert's brother, maintained that it was 'the interest of this country that those two provinces which command the navigation of the Elbe and the Weser, the only two inlets from the British Seas into Germany, and which, in case of any disturbance in the north, are most capable of protecting or interrupting the British trade to Hamburg, should rather be annexed to the King's Electoral dominions than remain in the hands of Denmark, who has frequently formed pretensions

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utilised the British quarrel with Charles XII. to promote his German interests, but it was his British Ministers who forced upon Sweden and Prussia their treaties with Hanover in 1719. Sweden only consented to give Bremen and Verden in return for British help against Russia.' ('Germany in the time of George I.,' *Royal Hist. So. Trans.*, 3rd series, vol. x. p. 46.)

<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs of Sir R. Walpole*, by W. Coxe, vol. i. p. 148.

on that city, or of Sweden, who has molested our commerce in the Baltic.’<sup>1</sup>

As a general rule, however, the need for Naval Stores directed, to a great extent, British policy towards the Baltic Powers : the attempt, by means of bounties to the American Colonies, to make the Empire self-sufficing in this respect, not meeting with any great success.

There is a striking passage in Coxe’s *Memoirs of Sir Robert Walpole* which throws light on the foreign policy of the time : ‘The only popular objection,’ we are told, under the date 1730, ‘to the management of foreign affairs now was that England was entangled in a multiplicity of treaties and guarantees ; that no rupture could take place in Europe, in which we should not be obliged to interfere as principals ; that it was the steady interest of Great Britain to contract no burthensome engagements, and to trust to her naval strength and insular situation for repelling all foreign attempts.

‘To this general objection a general answer was returned ; that a nation whose strength depends upon the flourishing state of trade and credit, (inseparable from that of public tranquillity), whose commerce extends to all parts of the world and is founded on compacts and stipulations with Powers of different and incompatible interests ; who has as many enviers as neighbours, as numerous rivals as there are commercial Powers, must have a more extensive and particular interest to foresee and obviate those troubles which, if not prevented in

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 149-50.



time, might occasion great disturbances, might place so large a share of dominion in the hands of one prince as to endanger the liberties of the rest, and consequently interrupt her trade. A people thus situated must provide themselves with foreign support, proportionable to the attempts that may be apprehended from the Continental Powers to their prejudice, which cannot possibly be secured but by reciprocal engagements on their part, and by interesting themselves as deeply in the welfare of other nations, as they expect those nations to interest themselves on their behalf.' <sup>1</sup>

But if this were really so, it was fortunate that the government of England was in the hands of a Minister deeply convinced of the necessity of peace. Walpole assuredly did not approach the question from the humanitarian standpoint. He had begun his public life by fiercely attacking the Tories for negotiating the Peace of Utrecht. But he cared deeply for two things, the prosperity of Great Britain and the security of the Hanoverian Succession ; and he recognised that, for both these objects, the maintenance of peace, so far as possible, was a necessity. France was the natural enemy ; and therefore, if Great Britain and France could become friendly, the maintenance of European peace would be much easier. For a moment it had seemed as though Great Britain, fresh from her triumph over France, would be overwhelmed. Alberoni, the Prime Minister of Spain, formed a grandiose plan, with the co-operation of Russia and Sweden, to effect this object ; but the English anticipated the

<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs of Sir R. Walpole*, by W. Coxe, vol. ii. pp. 137-8.

blow by almost annihilating the Spanish fleet near Syracuse (August 22, 1718); and the death of Charles XII. of Sweden gave its *quietus* to the plan. By the Peace of Utrecht the possession of Minorca, as well as Gibraltar, had been secured to England, so that henceforth she was directly concerned with Mediterranean questions. For some years Walpole and Fleury were able to work together for the common object of peace; but when the former saw that Fleury's pacific tendencies were being countermined at the French Court, he was quick to seize the opportunity of new alliances. The greatest difficulty had been with Spain. No country had more reason to resent the outcome of the War of the Spanish Succession. She was burning to retake Gibraltar. In 1727, war was only averted by the extreme patience of Walpole, a patience which had its uglier side when soldiers and sailors wasted away in the West Indies in enforced inactivity. During these years the British Government was always willing to restore Gibraltar for an equivalent, preferably Florida; but the grasping haughtiness of Spain neglected to make use of the opportunity. It appears that George I., in a letter, held out hopes of its restoration, without mentioning conditions, but such was assuredly not the intention of the British Government.

Although the influence of Walpole could postpone a breach with Spain, the causes at work were not removed and were bound to produce results. So long as Spain and Great Britain had been maintaining a common cause against France, English trade in the South American Seas received, as

was natural, toleration. But, with the undisputed supremacy of a Bourbon King in Spain, the attitude of its Government became very different. At the same time the Assiento treaty and the limited right to trade gave a position of security, under the shelter of which unauthorised trading by British ships from the West Indies flourished exceedingly. In their efforts to put a stop to this trade the Spanish authorities made use of the right of search ruthlessly. The case was well put by Benjamin Keene, the British Minister at Madrid : ‘ Upon the whole the state of our dispute seems to be that the commanders of our vessels always think that they are unjustly taken, if they are not taken in *actual* illicit commerce, even though proofs of their having loaded in that manner be found on board of them ; and the Spaniards, on the other hand, presume that they have a right of seizing not only the ships that are continually trading in their ports, but likewise of examining and visiting them on the high seas, in order to search for proofs of fraud, which they may have committed ; and till a medium be found out between these two notions, the Government will always be embarrassed with complaints, and we shall ever be negotiating in this country for redress, without ever being able to procure it.’<sup>1</sup> Walpole was himself most anxious to find such a medium ; but he was thwarted in his efforts, in Spain, by the hostile character of the Government, in England, by the action of the opposition in Parliament and by the growing public opinion of which that opposition made use. He admitted

<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs of Sir R. Walpole*, by W. Coxe, vol. iii. p. 9.

that British subjects had met with unjust treatment from Spanish Governors and officials such as deserved the highest resentment, but still 'if proper satisfaction and full reparation can be obtained by peaceable means, we ought not to involve the nation in a war from the event of which we have a great deal to fear.'<sup>1</sup> The elder Pitt was especially active in opposing Walpole's conciliatory measures. 'Is this,' he exclaimed, 'any longer a Nation? or where is an English Parliament if with more ships in our harbours than in all the navies of Europe, with more than two millions of people in the American Colonies, we will bear to hear of the expediency of receiving from Spain an insecure, unsatisfactory, dishonourable Convention, which carries downright subjection in every line.' Again: 'The complaints of your despairing merchants, the voice of England has condemned it! Be the guilt of it upon the head of the adviser! God forbid that this Committee should share the guilt by approving it!'<sup>2</sup> For the moment Walpole's argument that to insist upon the right to hover on the Spanish coasts, so long as we pleased, without being stopped or searched was, in effect, to claim full liberty of trade, secured a small parliamentary majority; but, with the Spanish Government determined not to yield an inch, and with his own colleagues working for war, Walpole's position became an impossible one, and in 1739 War was formally declared.

No doubt there was much to be said for Walpole's attitude. 'The British nation listened only to one side of the question, gave implicit credence to all

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 46.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 80-1.

the exaggerated accounts of the cruelties committed by the Spaniards without due evidence and without noticing the violations of express treaties by the British traders.' <sup>1</sup> The man whose alleged wrongs most fiercely inflamed English public opinion, the owner of 'Jenkins' ear,' was perhaps a truculent impostor, though there has been a reaction in favour of the truth of his story.<sup>2</sup> Difficult as was the preservation of peace, it is not clear that even then war was absolutely necessary. But wherein Walpole deserves condemnation is that, advocate as he was of peace, he did not, when his policy was defeated, resign, but continued the nominal head of a Government of whose measures he disapproved. Nor did the mischief end here. The more sincerely a Minister may have been an advocate of peace, the more necessary is it that, if he enters on war, he should conduct it vigorously. In Polonius's words :

'Beware  
Of entrance to a quarrel ; but, being in,  
Bear't that th' opposed may beware of thee.'

But Walpole proved as futile a War Minister as he had been a capable protector of British interests in times of peace. The story is familiar how Sir Robert Walpole, hearing the bells ringing for the declaration of war, remarked : ' They now *ring* the bells, but they will soon *wring* their hands ! ' But what a confession of weakness did the remark

<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs of Sir R. Walpole*, by W. Coxe, vol. iii. p. 110.

<sup>2</sup> A learned and able account of 'The Causes of the War of Jenkins' ear, 1739,' by H. W. V. Temperley, will be found in *Royal Hist. Soc. Transactions*, Third Series, vol. iii. pp. 198-236.

imply from one who had, to a large extent, the means of making of none effect his own prophecy. The feebleness of the British operations in the first years of the war encouraged the French to give play to their sympathies, and to appear upon the scene as the open ally of Spain.

On other grounds it proved impossible to isolate the Anglo-Spanish War and to concentrate British energies on objects purely British. However squalid may have been the immediate causes of that war, its real *raison d'être* was altogether rational, the expansion of British trade and shipping. More doubtful were the gains to be got from entrance into the land war which was the outcome of the violation of the Austrian Pragmatic Sanction. Under that Sanction the inheritance was secured to Maria Theresa, the Queen of Hungary, of all the territories possessed by her father, the Emperor. At least twelve European Governments had given their guarantee to this document ; but, when it came to the point, Great Britain was left in solitary state, in insisting upon its enforcement. Frederick of Prussia saw in the question the opportunity for the use of blackmail ; and undertook to support Maria Theresa if he received Silesia as compensation. On her refusing, he invaded, and finally conquered, that province. His action has been excused by Carlyle on the ground that a large proportion of the inhabitants was Protestant ! It is tempting to ascribe the attitude of Great Britain to British fidelity to a solemn undertaking ; but probably the political and personal interests of George II. were the main factors in deciding British policy.

In any case Great Britain found herself whirled into the vortex of European politics and compelled to conclude alliances against the Confederation opposed to her. Although England and France were from the first opposed to each other as auxiliaries of other Powers, it was not till 1744 that they became formally at war. So far as Great Britain was concerned, the War of the Austrian Succession was a day of very small things. Inasmuch, however, as in 1746 the French conquered the Austrian Netherlands and in 1747 invaded Holland, British interests were materially at stake. Great Britain and Holland were connected by mutual guarantees. In 1716 the Dutch had aided in the suppression of the Jacobite rebellion; and in 1727 British co-operation had succeeded in securing the suspension of the Ostend Company started by Charles VI. In the war of the Austrian succession English and Dutch fought side by side, and English and Dutch subsidies furnished the thirty thousand Russian troops who were marching to relieve the Netherlands, when peace was agreed to by the French on the basis of the *status quo ante bellum*.

The Maritime War against Spain seemed to lose itself in a morass, though in fact booty gained in it by privateers added not a little to the wealth of the country. On the continent the gallantry and determination of the rank and file could not atone for the absence of leadership. In this state of things the practical restoration of the *status quo ante bellum* was a success for British diplomacy. Even in India, through the genius of Dupleix, the French had won the superiority; and at the Peace Madras

could only be regained, by the sacrifice of Louisbourg, the one substantial gain of the war in North America. It had been won by the men of New England; and their success encouraged in them that inordinate sense of their superiority which became so great a menace to the British connexion. Still more lamentable in its results on American public opinion was the restoration of Louisbourg to the French, however it may have been justified from the standpoint of world-politics.

But if Great Britain had created for herself future difficulties by her action in this war, France had also laid the seed of a peril the full harvest of which is still now being reaped. By allying herself with the rising power of Prussia she was assisting in the development of her most dangerous future enemy. Frankenstein was calling into life the monster that would one day threaten his existence. And yet more was at stake than the future interests of France. The claims of morality had not assuredly been very much regarded in the past international relations of the various Powers; but men had gone on groping their way in a fog of self-deception and confusion. It was reserved for Frederick the Great to put in practice, by the dry light of logic, unblushing and unashamed, that creed of Machiavelli which he himself had, on paper, confuted. The whole law and the prophets of the doctrine that the State is Power, that consequently Might is Right, and the strong arm of the Prussian the inspired instrument of the right hand of the God of history, as enforced by Bismarck, and taught by Treitschke, was first proclaimed, when Frederick



swooped on Silesia. Time was needed for the manifestation of its full results ; and the mighty doings of the French Revolution, followed by the career of Napoleon, together with the weakness and inferiority of individual Hohenzollerns, were for a long time to bring other issues to the fore. None the less the dragon's teeth had been sown ; and sooner or later a new Europe would have to deal with the consequences.

Meanwhile, in blissful ignorance of what the future had in store, eighteenth century statesmen dealt with the problem of foreign policy. So far as Great Britain and France were concerned, both countries naturally reverted to the old policy which had held the field till the pacific tendencies of Walpole and Fleury had sought to build European peace upon the foundations of an Anglo-French *Entente*. Henceforth, for many years British statesmen regarded France as the enemy, and France had the same feeling towards Great Britain. Still the work of Walpole was by no means all undone. Carteret, though a very able and brilliant man and *persona grata* with George II., was too impatient of the arts of the politician for his administration to have been other than short-lived ; and Pelham, who soon succeeded him as first Minister, inherited Walpole's mantle and worked loyally for peace. It takes two, however, to make a bargain ; and, apart from the fact that Pelham had not the moral strength of Walpole, and could not always speak for his colleagues, and the fact that the King had his opinion on foreign policy, there was the insurmountable obstacle in the way that French

statesmen did not want to be on good terms with England. At the same time there was general agreement that for the time being peace was a necessity. The elder Pitt was now becoming of political importance. The sheet anchor of his foreign policy was always distrust and dislike of the Bourbons. But in 1750 he declared that 'no man in his senses would provoke a combat when he is just recovered from a violent fever, and his adversary is full of strength and vigour.'<sup>1</sup> On this ground he was able to support the peaceful policy of Pelham and Newcastle, and in his zeal for the stability of the Pelham Ministry carried complaisance so far as to support some of Newcastle's German bargains. When the ever-recurring complaint was made of the non-fulfilment by France of her undertaking with regard to Dunkirk, 'Nations,' Pitt said, 'as well as individuals, must sometimes forbear from the vigorous exaction of what is due to them. Prudence may require them to tolerate a delay, or even a refusal of justice, especially when their right can in no way suffer by such acquiescence. . . . I think that no gentleman after due consideration of the question whether it would be prudent in us to declare war against France in case she should not, on the first demand, instantly begin to demolish the port of Dunkirk, can agree to this motion.'<sup>2</sup> It may be held that in his course during these years Pitt was directly bidding for the favour of the King and a place in the Ministry; but his latest biographer

<sup>1</sup> *The Life of W. Pitt, Earl of Chatham*, by Basil Williams, vol. i. p. 177.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 178.

gives a spirited justification of his essential consistency on broad lines of policy and his carelessness about consistency in details. 'Throughout his life the danger to England of the Bourbon power dominated his mind. He hated the Bourbons because they represented to him all the intolerance and arbitrary rule which his soul most abhorred. United, he dreaded their strength for evil against the land of liberty he loved, and he spent a large part of his life in attempts to keep them apart, or raising a counterpoise to their union. During the period that Spain kept France at arm's length by a reconciliation with us, he was all for humouring her, a policy which he consistently followed until Spain returned to the French alliance in 1761. This intense hatred of the Bourbons and of the spirit they represented was one great source of Pitt's power with his countrymen. It was a simple idea which they could easily grasp; it was one they shared and in which Pitt never failed them.' <sup>1</sup>

But Pitt was quick to recognise that by attaching herself to the fading fortunes of Austria in the last war, Great Britain had, to use Lord Salisbury's expression, backed the wrong horse. As early as December, 1747, he had written to the Duke of Newcastle: 'I will sum up my whole political creed in two propositions: this country and Europe are undone without a secure, lasting peace; the alliance as it now stands has not the force even to obtain it without the interposition of Prussia.' <sup>2</sup> A year

<sup>1</sup> *The Life of W. Pitt, Earl of Chatham*, by Basil Williams, vol. i. p. 179.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 167.

later Frederick himself wrote: 'The system of Europe has changed so entirely that I should find myself soon on a good footing with Great Britain, for there is great divergence of interests between England and the Queen of Hungary.'<sup>1</sup> There were still, however, grave difficulties in the way of such a *rapprochement*. George II. cordially disliked his powerful nephew. 'The King of Prussia,' he told the French ambassador, 'is a mischievous rascal, a bad friend, a bad ally, a bad relation and a bad neighbour; in fact the most dangerous and evil-disposed Prince in Europe.'<sup>2</sup> Pitt, with the rope round his neck of his old utterances against Hanover, could not obtain forgiveness for himself from the King, much less secure the adoption of a new foreign policy. Still things were working in the direction that he desired. One effect of Newcastle's system of making alliances all round to secure the European balance was that Frederick, with the fear of a Russian attack from the East, found it necessary to come to terms with England. The result of Great Britain and Prussia being allies was to throw Austria into the arms of France (1756). By which means 'the whole edifice of foreign politics, laboriously built up by Newcastle during the last eight years, collapsed like a pack of cards.'<sup>3</sup> 'We have provoked,' said Pitt, 'before we can defend, we have neglected after provocation, and in every quarter of the world we are inferior to France.'<sup>4</sup> Disasters abroad led to weakness in Parliament; and the King in his own despatch was forced to make use

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 168.<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 180.<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 281.<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p. 279.

of the one man who knew that he could save the country and that no one else could.

The King's speech of December 2, 1756, with which Pitt inaugurated his first Ministry, contained a direct appeal to the people which 'marks a revolution in the conduct of the country's foreign policy. Foreign affairs had always been treated as the peculiar concern of the King and one or two trusted Ministers. With one stroke Pitt made them the concern of the public. By this publicity he did away once for all with the old system. Foreign policy had long consisted chiefly in abstruse calculations of checks and alliances to secure a balance of power on the Continent, a matter of profound indifference to the country. "We pay all and fight all," said Pelham, echoing the popular view; . . . all our efforts were devoted to bolstering up some other Power—Hanover, the Empress Queen, or, at best, Holland—while the national interests and the national enemy were alike lost sight of. To these Pitt recalled Parliament and the Nation. While Carteret and Newcastle were bothering their heads with Pragmatic Sanctions and Kings of the Romans and other such Will-o'-the-Wisps, Pitt . . . had been learning the real needs of the time through . . . leaders of the great Commercial Community, too long ignored or looked down upon by the Whig Magnates. . . . The two great obstacles to our growing trade were the Bourbon Powers. With Spain there was a temporary understanding since the last war; but France was everywhere aggressive. . . . Pitt, therefore, instead of making the King's speech turn on Hanover and treaties to

defend Hanover, pointed out the one object of the war, the defeat of "the ancient enemy of these Kingdoms," and that it should be waged chiefly where her aggressions had been most dangerous—in America. He took the nation into his confidence, he put to it a plain issue, and in return he asked it to fight its own battles. . . . Pitt's first Ministry would have been justified had he done nothing more than clear the decks for action by the plain statement of policy and courageous appeal for national exertion.' <sup>1</sup>

The cleavage was not perhaps so clear cut as seems from the above passage; and when a few months later Pitt at last obtained the power to put his policy in action, he was found, like his predecessors, sending troops to the Continent and declaring that America was to be won in Germany. Still it was one thing to fight side by side with the Great Frederick, another to depend upon the broken reed of petty German principalities.

With Pitt's conduct of the war we have here nothing to do, but merely with the policy of which it was the outcome. That policy, we have seen, involved the destruction of the Bourbon power; and therefore when, in spite of the long-suffering of Great Britain, Spain showed signs of joining with France, Pitt's policy was to anticipate matters by striking the first blow. It was because the Cabinet refused to agree with this resolution that he resigned.

Considering his hostility to the Bourbon Powers and his own past treatment, it was natural that

<sup>1</sup> *The Life of W. Pitt, Earl of Chatham.* by Basil Williams, vol. i. pp. 288-9.

the terms of the Peace of Paris, 1763, should have received his strongest condemnation. 'He saw in them the seeds of a future war. The Peace was insecure because it restored the enemy to her former greatness. The Peace was inadequate because the places gained were no equivalent for the places surrendered.'<sup>1</sup> On the other side 'Bedford stands out as not only the actual negotiator of the peace, but as Pitt's most worthy opponent, the only man who had a clear alternative design. Pitt advocated peace through war, Bedford proposed a policy of conciliation. He tried to meet the difficulties of a mercantilist age by an individualist policy. He was something of a philosopher as well as of a statesman, and declared that it was good policy as well as good conscience for men to do as they would be done by in public as well as private life. He thought we were in danger of over-colonising like Spain: he pointed out that it was "against nature" to deprive a Power with such an extensive seaboard as France of the possession of an adequate navy. He feared England was on the verge of embarking on a policy of aggression which would unite all the sea-powers of Europe against her.'<sup>2</sup>

The author of the article from which I have quoted decides against the Peace as inadequate. On the other hand, its terms seemed so hard to French statesmen that from the first they decided to be revenged when the opportunity arose. A powerful argument in favour of peace has been for

<sup>1</sup> *W. Pitt, Earl of Chatham*, by A. von Ruville, vol. iii. p. 91.

<sup>2</sup> Miss K. Hotblack in *Royal Hist. Soc. Transactions*, Third Series, vol. ii. pp. 254-5.

the most part ignored by its critics. Great as were Pitt's merits as a War Minister, he had little thought for finance ; and the Seven Years' War left a legacy of debt which others had to meet. If then, as seems certain, the insistence of terms such as would have satisfied Pitt meant a continuance of war, there was much to be said for the action of the Ministry. The main dispute at the time and afterwards was over the question of the Newfoundland fisheries. Assuredly the French rights proved a troublesome matter until the settlement of the question in 1904. But if, as was the case, the maintenance of those rights seemed a matter of life or death to French statesmen, was it worth while on their behalf to wreck the prospects of peace ? The writer in the *Annual Register* for 1762, who was probably Burke, dealt with the matter with much force and good sense : ' This was a point of infinite importance, and a subject of much controversy. In a commercial view it is certainly of great estimation. But it has been considered as even more material in a political light. Everybody knows that these extensive fisheries are the life of many maritime places, which would otherwise be of no sort of value ; that they are the great nurseries of seamen, and consequently the great resources of the Marine. Scarce any object could be of more importance to two nations who contended for a superiority in naval power.

The more clearly, therefore, it was the interest of Great Britain to acquire the exclusive Exercise of this fishery, the more strongly and evidently it became the interest of France to oppose themselves to such a pretension. Not only a large part of her



foreign trade depended on, this fishery, but a great part of her domestic supply. Besides, every hope of the strength and almost of the existence of a naval power must vanish with the cession of the fishery.

‘The English administration probably saw that France would rather run all hazards of war than totally relinquish this object. Since, therefore, they despaired of driving the French entirely from the fishery, they endeavoured as much as possible to diminish its value to them. In this respect they followed the plan of the former negotiation, except that some improvements were added.’<sup>1</sup>

But it was not merely on the ground of its adequacy as a settlement that the Peace was condemned, it was also described as a base betrayal of Frederick. ‘After amusing that great and wonderful prince,’ Pitt declared, ‘during four months with promises of a subsidy, he had been deceived and disappointed.’<sup>2</sup> The writer in the *Annual Register* explains the different attitude of the English negotiators in 1761 and 1762 in the following manner :

‘The spirit of the two negotiations, so far as regarded the peculiar interests of Great Britain, seems to have been perfectly similar. . . . But with regard to some of our allies the principle was greatly varied ; and we imagine that this change was sufficiently justified by the alteration which happened in the affairs of Germany during the interval between the two treaties. Those who conducted the negotiations in 1761 were steady in rejecting every

<sup>1</sup> *Annual Register*, 1762, pp. 56-7.

<sup>2</sup> von Ruville, *op. cit.* vol. iii. p. 91.

proposition in which they were not left at liberty to aid the King of Prussia with the whole force of Great Britain. Those who concluded the Peace in 1762 paid less attention to the interests, though they did not wholly neglect the safety of that Monarch. . . . Circumstanced as affairs then were, this conduct on our side was as defensible as the conduct which we held in 1761. At that time the affairs of the King of Prussia were at the lowest ebb ; he was overpowered by the whole weight of Austria, of Sweden, of the Empire of Russia as determined as ever in her enmity and then successful, to say nothing of France. Neither generosity, nor perhaps sound policy, ought to have permitted us to desert him in that situation. But when the last treaty was made, the condition of his affairs was absolutely reversed. He had got rid of the most powerful, and one of the most implacable, of his enemies. He had concluded a Peace with Sweden. The treaty itself freed him from all apprehensions of France. He had then none to contend with but a nominal army of the Empire, and one of Austria, which, though something more than nominal, was wholly unable to oppose his progress. His situation, from being pitiable, was become formidable. It was good policy to prevent the balance of Germany from being overturned to his prejudice : it would have been the worst in the world to overturn it in his favour.’<sup>1</sup> When Frederick was in a position to secure for himself, as in fact he did, a perfectly honourable Peace, there was surely nothing disgraceful in Great Britain

<sup>1</sup> *Annual Register*, 1762; pp. 54-5.

discontinuing the subsidies, the tendency of which was to feed a perpetual war in Germany ! A German historian, von Ruville, has set himself to disprove the accusation of treachery charged against the British Ministry ; but tradition dies hard, and we are still solemnly told that that severe moralist in the field of international politics, Prince Bismarck, attributed his distrust of England to the desertion of Frederick in 1762. He charitably concluded, in direct contradiction to the facts stated above, that but for the victories of Frederick the Great, the cause of the King of Prussia would have been abandoned by England earlier than it was : respect for the rights of other States in England lasting only so long as English interests are not touched.<sup>1</sup>

Whatever may have been the truth in all this, it is at least clear that the foundations of the elder Pitt's foreign policy were laid deep in the hatred of France. The doctrine *delenda est Carthago* may have been an impossible one to carry out in practice, but it was the doctrine of Pitt ; and, as the contemporary of Louis XIV.<sup>2</sup> and Louis XV., and the father of the statesman whose life was to be worn out in the struggle with Napoleon, it would be pharisaical to condemn him. The last act of Chatham's life was occasioned by the French peril. Convinced that the revolting colonies were in the right, he would not stir a finger to assist in their subjection ; but, when once France appeared upon the scene, and the old struggle had to be reopened,

<sup>1</sup> Bismarck, *op. cit.* vol. ii. pp. 252-3.

<sup>2</sup> Pitt was born in 1708. Louis XIV. died in 1715.

he recognised that the claims of imperial patriotism came first and foremost ; though how far even he could have brought back the temper which prevailed in the colonies during the Seven Years' War is open to much question. In any case he died before he could give effect to his policy ; and the wheels of history ground their way to the tragic finale of the surrender of Cornwallis at Yorktown.

When affairs were going badly in America the bungling British Government had proposed in 1778 an *offensive*, as well as defensive, alliance with Russia,<sup>1</sup> and were much surprised when, not unnaturally, Catherine rejected their offer. Nor did the bait of Minorca alter Catherine's resolution. Consequently the Treaty of Versailles (1783) left Great Britain in a position of extreme isolation. Frederick, with the prejudice and obstinacy of old age, scornfully rejected proffers of friendship from his natural ally against Austria. Austria, which had opposed England at her zenith, was not likely to desire her friendship in the day of her adversity. Moreover, Joseph was meditating a *coup* in the Netherlands most adverse to British interests. Russia, in spite of having taken the lead in the 'Armed Neutrality,' was the Power most friendly to England, but Catherine, with her eyes fixed on Turkey and Constantinople, saw no profit in an alliance with England. Thus the trend of European politics in the East, in Germany and in the Netherlands told heavily against England, and increased the natural reluctance of any Power to seek the

<sup>1</sup> *Diaries and Correspondence of the 1st Earl of Malmesbury*, ed. by 3rd Earl, vol. i. pp. 157-160.

friendship of a beaten nation.' <sup>1</sup> In any case, in the existing circumstances peace was a necessity. 'Till I see this country,' wrote George III., 'in a situation more respectable as to army, navy and finances, I cannot think anything that may draw us into troubled waters either safe or rational.' <sup>2</sup> In this state of things wrote Harris : 'The Emperor dupes Russia : France makes a fool of Prussia.' <sup>3</sup> At the end of 1785 the British foreign secretary wrote : 'Holland seems lost to us both in Europe and the East Indies ; and should the Emperor and Russia unite with France, Sweden must follow, and Denmark dare not be our friend. Under such circumstances what are we to look for but utter ruin ? If France is disengaged on the Continent and assisted by Spain, Holland and Russia (to say nothing of America), we must be attacked with greatly superior forces in the East and West Indies, and perhaps in Canada ; but what is still worse, we shall undoubtedly have the war brought into Ireland, and I very much doubt whether we can by any means avoid that country being divided, and a large part acting against us. If any of these points of attack succeed, and, above all, if our Navy should meet with any disaster from superior forces, the next step will be to bring war into this country, and the best issue of such an event must be attended with much distress. In short, the natural and political advantages of France are such that I very much fear the consequences.' <sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *W. Pitt and National Revival*, by T. Holland Rose, pp. 300-1.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 301.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 311.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 319-20.

The friction between the English and the Dutch, which culminated in actual war, at the end of 1780, had been due partly to the exercise by British ships of the right of Search, and partly to the fact that in Dutch politics the Republican party, which was in sympathy with France for the time being, had defeated the Orange party, which was in favour of the maintenance of the English alliance.

But the situation was not really so black as it appeared. In spite of the humiliation of Great Britain, Rodney had shown that her sea-power was still unrivalled ; and it was to her sea-power that England mainly owed her strength. France had come out victorious from the late war, but with crippled finances, and with a Government wholly unable to read the writing on the wall. As in America, so in the United Provinces, with less excuse, she set herself to work against constituted authority, regardless of the fact that the lesson might be taken to heart nearer home. There was evidence that the marvellous intellect of Catherine of Russia was being sapped by her physical excesses. Frederick, in his sour old age, was not the terror to Europe that he had been in his prime, and his successor Frederick William, as Harris wrote, resembled Solomon only in the matter of concubines. Lastly, the Emperor Joseph, in his spasmodic attempt to play the part of enlightened Providence, showed himself devoid of political capacity.

The politics of the United Provinces were the stage which gave England the opportunity of reappearance. The Emperor Joseph had chosen the time of the American War to resume the control of the Dutch

Barrier, the fortresses that, since the Peace of Utrecht, had been deposited in the hands of the Dutch for the common benefit and security of the Empire and themselves, to secure a defence from the power and ambition of France. Great Britain was at war with Holland when the demand was made (1781); and so the natural Guardian of the Barrier could not be invoked. A general alarm was spread through the United Provinces; their own fortresses, especially those on the Scheldt, were strengthened; but they were helpless by themselves to defeat Joseph's purpose.

Three years later the Emperor claimed from the Dutch the entire and free navigation of the Scheldt from Antwerp to the sea, a measure which the Dutch declared 'would be laying the inmost recesses and the vital sources of the State open and exposed: and would at once include not only the immediate security, but the independence and very existence of the republic.'<sup>1</sup> The attempted enforcement of the claim, by a vessel dispatched by the Emperor, threatened to bring about war. War was, however, averted, through the mediation of France; the rights of the Dutch to the exclusive navigation of the Scheldt being recognised (November 8, 1785). Still Holland 'was compelled to purchase at a large expense in money and present peace, a future doubtful security from a new and unexpected enemy.'<sup>2</sup> But, assuredly, the episode did not redound to the credit of Joseph's reputation as a man of honour, or of his skill as a politician.

Meanwhile, in another quarter Joseph had been

<sup>1</sup> *Annual Register*, 1784-5, p. 110.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 137.

showing his restless and unstable disposition. In 1784 he proposed to exchange the Austrian Netherlands for the Electorate of Bavaria. 'England and Holland,' wrote Harris from the Hague, January 25, 1785, 'gave the Low Countries, by the Peace of Utrecht, to the House of Austria, to serve as a barrier against France. . . . They cannot be alienated without the consent of these Powers. In this treaty-breaking age this perhaps does not signify a great deal, either to one or the other of the parties ; but we shall certainly be called on upon this occasion, and I scarce see how we can avoid giving something like a positive answer. . . . The Elector Palatine, as King of Brabant, . . . would be no contemptible monarch, and, if allied to England and the Emperor, . . . would contribute to the formation of no contemptible opposition to France, and be in the new system what this country (Holland) was in the old : this is the bright side of the medal.

'If his Majesty of Brabant, Burgundy, or by whatever title distinguished, should choose rather to be governed by France than protected by England (like these Boors), why then it is the reverse of the medal. In short, it is heads or tails.' <sup>1</sup>

The main article in Harris's political creed was distrust and hatred of France. He saw in the United Provinces a struggle going on between the Stadtholder, representing the House of Orange, and the so-called Patriot party. 'The whole tenor and the conduct of the French and Patriots leaves not a doubt that the principal object they aim at is to

<sup>1</sup> *Diaries and Correspondence of the 1st Earl of Malmesbury*, ed. by 3rd Earl, vol. ii. p. 96.



throw the whole weight of the Belgic Confederacy into the hands of the Province of Holland. Holland is to be mistress of the Republic and France is to govern Holland.' <sup>1</sup> The wife of the Stadtholder was the niece of Frederick the Great and the sister of his successor ; and the aim of Harris was to commit France and Prussia 'in a military quarrel,' and short of this, to encourage Prussia in a political one—'England in both cases to remain quiet.' <sup>2</sup>

The Dutch had been joined in a close alliance with France as early as 1785 ; and, as time went on, Harris grew more and more eager in his desire to break up this conspiracy. The Patriots were, in fact, an unpopular oligarchy ; and a well-organised opposition could overcome them. The main drawback was the feebleness of the Stadtholder and his jealousy of his loyal and able wife. 'If we lose this country,' Harris wrote to Lord Carmarthen (May 1st, 1787), 'France will acquire what she has always considered as the climax of her power. The Low Countries must immediately after fall into her clutches, and it is with this view that she is fomenting the troubles that are beginning to appear there. There is *good stuff* enough here to vanquish twice the strength of our opponents ; and, if we will be *bold* enough to assume the style and tone which belong to us, *I will pledge my head on the event.*' <sup>3</sup>

Harris's enthusiasm fired the Home Government, in spite of the peaceful inclinations of both the

<sup>1</sup> *Diaries and Correspondence of the 1st Earl of Malmesbury*, ed. by 3rd Earl, vol. ii. p. 241.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 240.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 298-9.

King and Pitt ; and at 'a meeting of the Cabinet at which Harris was present (May 26, 1787) it was decided to advance £20,000 by way of loan, to promote the objects of the Stadtholder's party.<sup>1</sup> A consideration which no doubt counted for much with the British Government was the apparent design of the French to use the Dutch interest as a means of attack upon the British power in India. 'The main object of the French here,' wrote Harris in April, 1787, 'seems to be to increase the number of European troops they may dispose of in the East Indies, and for this purpose there never sails a ship, on account of the Dutch Company, which is not crowded with recruits. M. de Vergennes has agents employed at Amsterdam for no other purpose than to find out persons who had been accustomed to India, who know the language and habits of the Country ; and wherever they could be discovered, they were engaged at almost any price ; and I am told there is scarcely an Indian Prince who has not a French Emissary at his Court.

'The Faction here, in pursuance of the repeated request of France, are indefatigable in attempting to get the direction of the (East India) Company into their hands, and every possible means (to my certain knowledge) has been employed to corrupt the present Court of Directors.'<sup>2</sup>

But now more powerful help came to assist Harris's endeavours. The great Frederick had died in 1786 ; and his successor, though no Paladin of romance, was induced to espouse the cause of his insulted sister. With the march of Prussian troops upon

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 307.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 289-90.

Amsterdam, the house of cards of Dutch patriotism soon collapsed. On October 2, 1787, a secret convention was signed between England and Prussia, for the defence of the States. Under this, while a Prussian army marched into Holland, England was to prepare forty ships of the line to support it.<sup>1</sup> On August 13, 1788, a defensive treaty of alliance was signed by Great Britain and Prussia. A similar treaty between Great Britain and the United Provinces had been signed on the 25th of April of the same year. In the following month Sir James Harris was raised to the peerage as Lord Malmesbury. Certainly no diplomat had ever worked harder or more adroitly for the interests of his country.

Moreover, in these years, whilst Pitt was carefully husbanding British resources in case of need, he was always zealous to maintain a strong navy. His biographer, Mr. J. Holland Rose, has conclusively shown that Pitt took the keenest interest in the details of foreign policy, and often practically dictated the dispatches of the Secretary of State, Lord Carmarthen.

In spite, however, of natural distrust of France, Pitt had sought to mend matters by an understanding with that country. The first conception of a commercial treaty between Great Britain and France was formed not by him, but by Vergennes and Shelburne ; but Pitt threw himself into the scheme with great zeal.

Strangely enough the younger Pitt, example as he was in every way of filial piety, took as his

<sup>1</sup> *Diaries and Correspondence of the 1st Earl of Malmesbury*, ed. by 3rd Earl, vol. ii. p. 352.

model, with regard to foreign policy, during the first years of his public life, not his father but the peace-loving Walpole. History repeated itself in that in both France and England Ministers were at the helm who sincerely desired an Anglo-French *rapprochement*. It was the policy of Vergennes, having wiped out the disgrace of the Peace of Paris, 1763, to establish cordial relations with England for the future ; and the younger Pitt's most earnest desire was in every way to promote such a new attitude. In advocating, in February, 1787, the commercial treaty with France, signed in 1786, Pitt said : ' Considering the treaty in its political view, he should not hesitate to contend against the too-frequently advanced doctrine that France was and must be the unalterable enemy of Britain. His mind revolted from this position as monstrous and impossible. To suppose that any nation could be unalterably the enemy of another was weak and foolish. It had neither its foundation in the experience of nations, nor in the history of man. It was a libel on the constitution of Political Societies and supposed the existence of diabolical malice in the original frame of man.' ' By promoting habits of friendly intercourse and of mutual benefit the treaty, while it invigorated the resources of Great Britain, made it less likely that she should have occasion to call forth those resources. It certainly had at least the happy tendency to make the two Nations enter into more intimate communion with one another, to enter into the same views even of taste and manners ; and while they were mutually benefited by the connexion, and endeared to one another by the result

of the common benefits, it gave a better chance for the preservation of harmony between them, while, so far from weakening, it strengthened their sinews of war. That we should not be taken unprepared for war was a matter totally distinct from treaty. It depended in no degree on that circumstance, but simply and totally on the watchfulness of the administration for the time being. He had heard of the invariable character of the French nation, and of the French Cabinet ; her restless ambition and her incessant enmity and designs against Great Britain ; and he noticed the particular instance of her interference in our late disputes, and of the result of her attack at that time. That France had in that instant of our distress interfered to crush us was a truth over which he did not desire to throw the slightest veil. . . . But although he thought France the aggressor in most of our former wars, yet her assurances and frankness during the present negotiation were such as in his opinion might be confided in. What might be the projects which wild ambition might one day dictate was beyond his penetration ; but at present the Court of France was governed by maxims too prudent and political not to consult its own safety and happiness beyond the ministerial aims of impracticable conquest. Oppressed as this Nation was during the last War by the most formidable combination for its destruction, yet had France very little to boast at the end of the contest, which should induce her again to enter deliberately into hostilities against this Country. . . . When France perceived that in that dreadful contest, when with the enormous

combination of Powers against us, it might be truly said that we were struggling for our existence, we not only saved our honour but manifested the solid, and, he might almost be tempted to say, the inexhaustible resources of the land; reflecting that, though she had gained her object in dismembering our Empire, she had done it at an expense which had sunk herself in extreme embarrassment; and reflecting also that such a combination of hostile power against us, without a single friend on our side, can never be imagined again to exist, may I not (exclaimed Mr. Pitt) be led to cherish the idea that seeing the durable and steady character of our strength, and in the inefficiency as well as the ruin of hostility, France would eagerly wish to try the benefits of an amicable connexion with us? ' 1

It is idle to speculate on what might have been, because the cataclysm of the French Revolution upset the whole European system and brought about a wholly new condition of affairs. In their desire for peace, Pitt, the Foreign Secretary, Lord Grenville, and the King were all agreed. When in April, 1791, Grenville succeeded the Duke of Leeds, George III. wrote: ' I cannot help adding that, in addition to his ability and diligence, the knowledge of his decided opinion how essential peace is to the welfare of this Kingdom makes me think it most advantageous that we should hold the seals of the Foreign Department.' 2

<sup>1</sup> *The Speeches of the Rt. Hon. W. Pitt in the House of Commons*, 3 vols. 2nd ed. 1808. vol. i. pp. 249-52.

<sup>2</sup> *Hist. MSS. Com., Dropmore MSS.*, vol. ii. p. 60.

In 1789 the unnecessary innovations of Joseph II. provoked a rebellion in the Belgic provinces. This did not in the beginning draw its inspiration from the French Revolution, and these provinces desired the protection of Great Britain, being willing to hand over Ostend to that Power, whilst Prussia acquired Luxemburg and the Eastern provinces. Prussia was desirous to encourage the movement, not from sympathy with the people, but because she sought in the general disturbance opportunities of expansion. Pitt, however, was disinclined to interfere 'in consequence of an application which does not appear to be made by any regular or acknowledged authority'; and Prussia was induced to follow England's example, though reluctantly and with a bad grace, the Prussian Government being at the time full of ambitious schemes to extend their country at the expense of Austria. The death of Joseph in 1790 helped towards the solution of the Belgic question; and his successor, Leopold, was able to arrive at a fairly satisfactory settlement,<sup>1</sup> though events were now to take place which made any previous arrangement of no value.

Pitt had not been very successful in his relations with Russia and Austria. It was the misfortune of Europe that in the difficult years preceding the French Revolution Catherine of Russia and Joseph II., by their grandiose schemes of personal ambition, were already shaking the foundations of the European system. These monarchs were continually trying

<sup>1</sup> *W. Pitt and National Revival*, by J. H. Rose, pp. 511-17. *Hist. of England in the Eighteenth Century*, by W. E. H. Lecky, vol. vi. pp. 104-139.

to upset the balance of power as Great Britain understood it. Sweden was in great danger of being overwhelmed by Russia and Denmark, 'whereby every idea of any future balance of power in the north would be totally destroyed.' France had been the traditional ally of Sweden, but now Prussia and Great Britain, 'through a sudden turn of public affairs, found it necessary to put themselves in the place of France, to supply her imbecility by supporting her alliances, and to take up that system of policy which she had so long pursued. Such were the motives which induced England and Prussia to become arbiters of the Peace and protectors of the liberties of the north, so far as the preservation of some equipoise in the state of power there might produce that effect. Such likewise are the motives that must ever operate upon all States in taking such a part; for the Utopian ideas that nations will encounter the evils and dangers of war upon the disinterested principles of preserving or restoring the liberties of others must be considered by all sober politicians, as well as philosophers, as "the dreams of men awake." ' ' 1

After this rather depressing avowal of eighteenth-century faith, it is consoling to find that the British Minister, Mr. Elliot, could write: 'It was on the acknowledged character of British veracity, staple as the foundation of their island, the underwritten saw a Sovereign and a Prince ready to stop the effusion of blood on the point of inundating the north of Europe. It was on the verbal assurances of a stranger that the armies, ready to combat,



have resigned their hatred, and renewed their ancient ties of amity and confraternity.' <sup>1</sup>

An agreement between Catherine and Joseph II. for the partitioning of European Turkey excited the cupidity of Frederick William II. He threatened to intervene as the ally of the Turks. The opportune death, however, of the Austrian Emperor mended matters. His brother and successor, Leopold, signed a convention at Reichenbach in July, 1790, by which he undertook to make peace with Turkey; the *status quo ante bellum* being the basis of negotiations. In the following year Great Britain and the Dutch Republic entered into a guarantee of the Austrian Netherlands, on condition that their constitutions were restored. The main danger to peace seemed at the time the attitude of Prussia. 'The King of Prussia's earnestness,' wrote Lord Auckland from the Hague in July, 1791, 'to add Austria to our alliance will not, I hope, diminish. . . . If it should succeed it probably will contribute to our system of peace, and to the continuance of the present state of power in Europe; but it may be doubted whether those objects, however beneficial to other nations, are eligible for the Prussian Government, which, being military in its composition and very essence, requires the heat and energy of war to maintain it.' <sup>2</sup>

'The conclusion of the Sistovo business' (the peace between Russia and Turkey), wrote Lord Grenville in the August of the same year, 'has removed every difficulty which there was in the

<sup>1</sup> *Annual Register*, 1788, p. 201.

<sup>2</sup> *Hist. MSS. Com., Dropmore MSS.*, vol. ii. p. 139.

way of our speaking out, and avowing our determination of the most scrupulous neutrality in the French business ; and I now hold this language to all the Foreign Ministers, in order that it may clearly be understood that we are no parties to any step the King of Prussia may take on this subject. I was uneasy about the Netherlands. Every information I have concurs to show that the dissentients there are gaining ground. . . . This union of the Netherlands with France is the very thing that this country and the Republic have most to apprehend. If the Emperor's conduct had been wise, and if he had known how to avail himself of his own situation, the measures we had taken to prevent this union would have been successful. But, as it is, I fear the game is no longer in our hands. Under these circumstances it is perhaps best for us that the Hague Convention ' (the guarantee mentioned above) ' was not ratified, and I think we shall do wisely to show a great degree of reserve on that point at present. In all other respects it appears to me that the Maritime Powers may look with great indifference and security at the new scenes which are arising. Some of the principal Powers of Europe seem not to have learnt that lesson which we have been taught by a severe experience that no acquisition is worth the expense of conquering and maintaining it. If, while they are gaining this experience, they will leave Great Britain and Holland to the undisturbed enjoyment of their external and *internal* tranquillity I know not what more we can wish. Our own danger is at home ; and for that danger peace and economy are our best resources, and

with them I flatter myself, *we . . .* have not much to fear.' <sup>1</sup>

Again, as late as June, 1792, Lord Auckland wrote: 'With respect to the larger politics, it is pleasant to observe how providentially the conduct of the Prussian and Austrian Cabinets has tended to separate us with credit from any participation in their concerns. When in 1790 I intimated such repeated and earnest objections to the project of a Polish alliance, I apprehended that there were many risks in that project and no adequate advantages to compensate them: but I certainly did not foresee the inextricable scrapes into which a Polish alliance might soon have led us.' <sup>2</sup>

The policy of Great Britain had been to group the weaker States round Prussia and Great Britain, so as to form a bulwark against the ambitions of Russia and Austria, and it is possible that a formidable display of force in the Baltic in 1790 might have brought Catherine to reason; but the treachery of Prussia which encouraged Catherine in resistance, whilst posing as the ally of Great Britain, rendered the task of maintaining the *status quo* in the interests of Turkey well-nigh hopeless; whilst the shifting attitude of the Emperor and of Gustavus III. of Sweden added to British difficulties. Still, writing in September, 1791, Pitt believed that 'the general state of Europe, taking in the whole, affords so favourable a prospect to this country that we have great reason to be contented. . . . The connection between Prussia and Austria, whatever right we

<sup>1</sup> *Hist. MSS. Com., Dropmore MSS.*, vol. ii. pp. 171-2.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 279.

have to complain of the steps which have led to it, cannot, I think, produce any permanent mischief to our system. . . . For the rest, in the singular and uncertain state of Europe, our chief business must be to watch events and keep ourselves quiet.' <sup>1</sup>

It can hardly, however, be admitted that the Partition of Poland did not involve 'a permanent mischief' to the European System. The first Partition (in 1772), in the words of Lecky, 'shook the political system, lowered the public morals and weakened the public law of Europe.' <sup>2</sup> As early as 1789 Prussia was in favour of wresting Galicia from Austria and restoring it to Poland; so as to receive in return from Poland the important towns of Dantzic and Thorn. The pretence of objecting to a new Constitution was the immediate cause of the second Partition (1793). Prussia, in entering upon the French War, sought some indemnity, and the Polish province of Posen lay ready to hand. Catherine was the prime mover of the game, but the part played by Prussia was the basest, because she had encouraged and approved the formation of the new Constitution, and had recently, in forming an alliance with Poland, solemnly guaranteed her integrity. Austria, as usual, was prepared to act a subservient part in the tragedy. 'Poland lay almost wholly beyond the sphere of English interests and influence, and England could probably under no circumstances have prevented the partition.' <sup>3</sup> But it was unfortunate that England's necessary allies in the struggle against French aggression should have thus

<sup>1</sup> J. H. Rose, *op. cit.* p. 629.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.* vol. vi. p. 81

<sup>3</sup> Lecky, *op. cit.* vol. vii. p. 114.

openly shown their credentials as vindicators of European law.

In another direction more exclusively British, Pitt had achieved a distinct success. In 1790 Spain set up a claim to Nootka Sound or Vancouver Island. Great Britain at once made it manifest that persistence in such claim would mean war. For a short time the issue between peace and war hovered in the balance; but France finally decided not to support her ally, so that Pitt was able, without cost or bloodshed, to secure for Great Britain the untold possibilities of the future British Columbia.<sup>1</sup>

With regard to foreign policy, there was in the eighteenth century no difference between political parties. The Tories, as having been generally in opposition, and because of their hostility to the House of Hanover, were naturally inclined to criticise continental entanglements, caused by the interests of that House; but they, no more than the Whigs, desired for Great Britain a position of complete isolation from European alliances. The elder Pitt had held his head above party connexions, thereby bringing on himself the distrust of Burke, and, it is probable, playing into the hands of George III. His son started with the same views, though repugnance to the ideals of the French Revolution soon threw him into the ranks of the Conservatives. In fact, under the dissolvent force of that Revolution, the British party system found itself in the crucible.

<sup>1</sup> A secret mission of Hugh Elliot to Mirabeau, the chairman of the *Comité Diplomatique*, seems to have been the main cause of France failing to fulfil her obligations under the *pacte de famille*. See *The Despatches of Earl Gower, 1770-1792*, ed. by Oscar Browning, pp. 38-9.

Whig and Tory ceased to have their old connotation ; and the Whig party of the past was torn into fiercely opposed portions, the one typified by Fox, which, in a somewhat dilettante fashion, was genuinely Radical, the other typified by Burke, which was pre-eminently Conservative. Both Fox and Burke had in the past been strong advocates of European alliances to secure the balance of power, the difference in their later views being entirely due to the differences of their attitude towards the French Revolution.

## CHAPTER IV

### BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY DURING THE FRENCH REVOLUTION AND THE EMPIRE. 1791-1814

WHEN the storm cloud of the French Revolution appeared upon the horizon, Pitt's attitude towards these new and strange phenomena was eminently characteristic of his cool and cautious temper. As a pioneer of Parliamentary reform he was prepared to welcome tentative steps in the direction of popular government. As a British Minister, responsible for British finance, he, not unnaturally, noted with secret satisfaction the accumulating proofs of French political impotence. As late as June, 1791, the shrewd Lord Auckland wrote: 'I confess that I do not know what result to wish for; I heartily detest and abhor the whole system of the *Democrats* abstractedly considered; but I am not sure that the continued course of their struggles to maintain a disjointed and unofficial government would not be beneficial to our political interests, and the best security to the permanence of our prosperity.<sup>1</sup> In the previous year Pitt had declared that 'the present convulsions of France must, sooner or later, ter-

<sup>1</sup> *Hist. MSS. Com., Dropmore MSS.*, vol ii. p. 97.

minate in general harmony and regular order. . . . Whenever the situation of France shall become restored, it will prove freedom rightly understood, freedom resulting from good order and good government; and thus circumstanced France will stand forward as one of the most brilliant Powers in Europe.' <sup>1</sup> Even when the excesses of the Jacobins damped these high hopes in 1792, he maintained that there never was a time in the history of this country when from the situation of Europe we might more reasonably expect fifteen years of peace than we may at the present moment,<sup>2</sup> and cut down the military establishments by £200,000. Again, after the execution of the King and Queen of France, Pitt was careful to refrain from interfering with the internal affairs of France; and in 1796 and again in 1797 he proved himself sincerely anxious for peace by directing the negotiations which were carried on by Malmesbury against the opinion of the Foreign Secretary, Lord Grenville.<sup>3</sup> Pitt was not, however, in favour of peace at any price, and when Holland was threatened he wrote (November 13, 1792): 'It seems absolutely impossible to hesitate as to supporting our ally in case of necessity.'<sup>4</sup> It is true that the final Declaration of War came from France (February, 1793), but in any case, unless Great Britain had repudiated her treaty obligations, it could not possibly have been avoided. His rival Fox from the first assumed an attitude of blind

<sup>1</sup> *Parl. Hist.*, vol. xxviii. p. 351.      <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* vol. xxix. p. 326.

<sup>3</sup> *Diaries and Correspondence of the 1st Earl of Malmesbury*, ed. by the 3rd Earl, vol. iii. pp. 259-591.

<sup>4</sup> *The Life of W. Pitt*, by Earl Stanhope, vol. ii. p. 173.



admiration towards the Revolution and its consequences. Hitherto his foreign policy had not been very enlightened. He had opposed the Commercial Treaty with France, on the ground that Great Britain and that country must always be natural enemies. In his zeal for Russia he seems to have sent in 1791 an opposition envoy, Robert Adair, to countermine Pitt's policy.<sup>1</sup> Just as, at the time of the American War, with reckless, however generous-minded, levity he had gloated over every British reverse, so now he had no thought but to gratify the instincts of a vague humanitarianism. It is necessary, however, to note that, in his brief periods of office, Fox appeared in a very favourable light, adding to his great intellectual powers good sense and a quick grasp of the situation. At the opposite pole of opinion stood Edmund Burke. His views on the French Revolution have been criticised as the outcome of mere sentiment. No judgment could be fals~~er~~. In fact no man was ever more actuated by principles, stretched almost to the breaking point. Almost alone of his generation he saw the full significance of the Revolution and what its consequences would be. 'It is a revolution of doctrine and theoretic dogma.'<sup>2</sup> Almost alone of his generation he foresaw that the revolutionary system would not of necessity be either weak or short lived.<sup>3</sup> Where he failed was in not recognising the seeds of mischief in the past which

<sup>1</sup> *Hist. MSS. Com., Drogheda MSS.*, vol. ii. *passim*.

<sup>2</sup> 'Thoughts on French Affairs,' *The Works of E. Burke*, 7th ed. vol. iv. p. 319.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 346.

finally produced so awful a harvest. He saw the strength of a militant democracy; but he failed to see that, whilst its coming was inevitable, good economic conditions, the spread of education, and the apprenticeship of local self-government, might draw from the dragon its fangs. Thus, with all his depth of thought and wealth of expression, no statesman failed more lamentably than did Burke in anticipating the point of view of the British Commonwealth of to-day. In the same way that he opposed, to any idea of imperial federation, as perpetual and irremovable, the physical barrier of three thousand miles of ocean, so he denied the possibility of salvation to a Europe that was not based on the foundations of the existing order of things. But once accept the strength of Burke's premisses, and there is no resisting the strength of his appeal. In fact he summoned Europe, and especially Great Britain, to a new crusade against the forces of atheism and anarchy. 'If,' he wrote, 'the war made to prevent the Union of two Crowns upon one head was a just war, this, which is made to prevent the tearing all Crowns from all heads which ought to wear them, and, with the crowns, to smite off the sacred heads themselves, this is a just War.'

'If a war to prevent Louis XIV. from imposing his religion was just, a war to prevent the murderers of Louis XVI. from imposing their irreligion upon us is just; a war to prevent the operation of a system which makes life without dignity and death without hope is a just war.'

'If to preserve political independence and civil freedom to nations was a just ground of war, a war

to preserve national independence, property, liberty, life and honour from certain, universal havoc is a war just, necessary, manly, pious : and we are bound to persevere in it by every principle, divine and human, as long as the system which menaces them all, and all equally, has an existence in the world.' <sup>1</sup>

But with all this fanaticism of thought and violence of utterance Burke went down to the bedrock of political principle, unknown to the opportunist politician. 'In the intercourse between nations, we are apt to rely too much on the instrumental part. We lay too much weight on the formality of treaties and compacts. We do not act much more wisely when we trust to the interests of men as guarantees of their engagements. The interests frequently tear to pieces the engagements, and the passions trample upon both. Entirely to trust to either is to disregard our own safety, or not to know mankind. Men are not tied to one another by papers and seals. They are led to associate by resemblances, by conformities, by sympathies. It is with nations as with individuals. Nothing is so strong a tie of amity between nation and nation as correspondence in laws, customs, manners and habits of life. They have more than the force of treaties in themselves. They are obligations written in the heart. They approximate men to men, without their knowledge, and sometimes against their intentions. The secret, unseen, but irrefragable bond of habitual intercourse holds them together, even when their perverse and litigious nature sets them to equivocate, scuffle

<sup>1</sup> 'Letters on a Regicidal Peace.' Letter I. *op. cit.* vol. v. pp. 305-6.

and fight about the terms of their written obligations.' <sup>1</sup>

We thus arrive at the conclusion of the solidarity of European interests. The writers on Public Law have often called this aggregate of nations a Commonwealth. They had reason. It is virtually one Great State, having the same basis of general law, with some diversity of provincial customs and local establishments.' But if so, what is the inference? 'There is a law of neighbourhood which does not leave a man a perfect master on his own ground. When a neighbour sees a new erection in the nature of a nuisance set up at his door, he has a right to represent it to the judge, who, on his part, has a right to order the work to be stayed, or, if established, to be removed. . . . Such is the law of civil vicinity.' Now when there is no constituted judge, as between independent States there is not, the vicinage itself is the natural judge. It is, preventively, the assertor of its own rights, or, irremedially, their avenger. Neighbours are presumed to take cognizance of each other's acts. This principle, which, like the rest, is as true of nations as of individual men, has bestowed on the Grand Vicinage of Europe a duty to know and a right to prevent any capital innovation which may amount to the erection of a dangerous nuisance.' <sup>2</sup> We have here in broad outline an anticipation of the doctrine of the Holy Alliance, dealt with below. But Burke does not deal with the difficulty, suggested both by Rousseau and Castlereagh, that stood in the way of such enforcement of moral right. 'One cannot guarantee princes,'

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 317-8.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 321-323.

wrote the former, 'against the revolt of their subjects without at the same time guaranteeing subjects against the tyranny of princes.'<sup>1</sup> Similarly Castlereagh wrote: 'The idea of an *alliance solidaire* by which each State shall be bound to support the state of succession, government and possession within all other states from violence and attack, upon receiving for itself a similar guarantee, must be understood as morally implying the previous establishment of such a system of general government as may secure and enforce upon all Kings and Nations an internal system of peace and justice. Till the mode of constructing such a system shall be devised, the consequence is inadmissible, as nothing could be more immoral or more prejudicial to the character of Governments generally than the idea that their force was collectively to be prostituted to the support of established power without any consideration of the extent to which it was abused.'<sup>2</sup> It is curious to note the contrast between the philosopher Burke and the practical opportunist Castlereagh; but considering the enormity of the danger as it presented itself to the former, it was

<sup>1</sup> *Jugement sur la paix perpetuelle* quoted by W. Alison Phillips in *The Confederation of Europe*, p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> 'Memorandum on Treaties presented at Aix-la-Chapelle,' quoted *Ibid.* p. 25. Compare Wellington to Beresford (November 3, 1823). 'Before we can guarantee anything we must know what it is. We must be sure that it will stand the test of inquiry in the most acute assembly of men in the world; and it must provide not only for the rights of the monarch, but also for the freedom of the person, and for the property of the subject, and, above all, for the security of those advantages for the subject.' *Despatches and Correspondence of the Duke of Wellington*, ed. by his son, vol. ii. p. 164.

natural enough that in the particular case he should see no possibility of non-interference.

Upon the spiritual side of the contest Burke is especially illuminating: 'The princes were easily taught to slide back into their old habitual course of politics. They were easily led to consider the flames that were consuming France, not as a warning to protect their own buildings (which were without any party-wall and linked by a contiguity into the edifice of France). but as a happy occasion for pillaging the goods, and for carrying off the materials of their neighbour's house. Their provident fears were changed into avaricious hopes. . . . They aimed, or pretended to aim, at defending themselves against a danger from which there can be no security in any defensive plan. If armies and fortresses were a defence against Jacobinism, Louis XVI. would this day reign a powerful monarch over a happy people.' <sup>1</sup>

'So long as there was any appearance of success, the spirit of aggrandizement, and consequently the spirit of mutual jealousy, seized upon all the Coalesced Powers. Some sought an accession of territory at the expense of France, some at the expense of each other, some at the expense of third parties; and, when the vicissitude of disaster took its turn, they found common distress a treacherous bond of faith and friendship.' <sup>2</sup>

No doubt there was much force in this criticism. Against the spiritual forces of the Revolution methods merely material spent themselves in vain. The trouble was that the spiritual creed of Burke belonged

<sup>1</sup> Letter II. *op. cit.* p. 347.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 348.

to a dying epoch ; whilst the working out of a more reasonable faith, to stand half-way between doctrinaire Jacobinism and reactionary absolutism, was still, even in England, the most advanced, politically, of European nations, in the womb of time.

But it must not be thought that, even as things were, moral considerations did not enter into the case set up by British statesmen. ‘England,’ said Pitt, ‘will never consent that France shall arrogate the power of annulling at her pleasure, and at the pretence of a natural right of which she makes herself the only judge, the political System of Europe, established by solemn treaties and guaranteed by the consent of all the Powers.’ He had already said : ‘To insist upon the opening of the river Scheldt is an act of itself in which the French Nation had no right to interfere at all, unless she was the Sovereign of the Low Countries, or boldly professed herself the general arbitress of Europe. This singular circumstance was an aggravation in their case, because they were bound by the faith of solemn and recent treaties to secure to the Dutch the exclusive navigation of the Scheldt, and to oppose the opening of that river if any other Power had attempted it. If France were the Sovereign of the Low Countries, she would only succeed to the rights which were enjoyed by the House of Austria : and if she possessed the sovereignty with all its advantage, she must also take it with all its incumbrances, of which the shutting up of the Scheldt was one. France can have no right to annul the stipulation, relative to the Scheldt, unless she has also the right to set aside equally all the

other treaties between all the Powers of Europe, and all the other rights of England and of her allies.' <sup>1</sup>

To the argument that Holland had made no appeal for Great Britain to enforce the treaty, Pitt replied that, in fact, there had been a protest by the States-General against ships going up the Scheldt ; but if, ' from the sudden effect and progress of French ambition and of French arms, Holland had just reason to be afraid to make a formal requisition ; if she had seen just reason not to do what she might have been well justified in doing, that was no reason why we should not observe our treaty. Are we to stand by as indifferent spectators, and look at France trampling upon the ancient treaties of the allies of this country ? Are we to view with indifference the progress of French ambition and of French arms by which our allies are exposed to the greatest danger ? This is, surely, no reason for England to be inactive and slothful. If Holland has not immediately called upon us for our support and assistance, her forbearance ought not to be supposed to arise from her indifference about the River Scheldt. If Holland had not applied to England when Antwerp was taken, the French might have overrun her territory. And unless we wish to stand by, and suffer State after State to be subverted under the power of France, we must now declare our firm resolution effectually to oppose those principles of ambition and aggrandizement, which have for their object the destruction of England, of Europe, and of the world.' <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The War Speeches of W. Pitt*, ed. by R. Coupland, pp. 43-4.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 45-6.



One could wish that Great Britain had made a more vigorous protest when a few years before Joseph II. had equally done violence to treaty rights with regard to the Scheldt ; but, as we have seen, England was, at the time, completely isolated ; and Holland had just been her enemy. Upon the whole, it is clear that Great Britain entered upon the Great War with clean hands, and that, so far from having secret motives of ambition, her Prime Minister recognised in peace the chief British interest. Very different unhappily was the situation of other parties to the alliance, formed against revolutionary France : and, just as the speed of a battle fleet is decided by its slowest member, so the moral force of the alliance was impaired by the conduct of any of its members. What indeed could be expected from Powers which entered upon a crusade in behalf of violated treaty rights with hands covered or about to be covered with the stain of a partitioned Poland ? The manner of conducting the war Pitt, for the most part, left to others, and, when he interfered, showed few signs of ability in that direction. Finance was his strong point, and he had neither his father's ambition nor his capacity to be the organiser of victory. Competent critics are found to maintain that the policy of separate small West Indian expeditions was a wise one ; and it might well seem the line of least resistance, to pursue the traditional course of maritime and colonial expansion. At the same time, it seems very probable that, if, in the first years of the war, the British offensive had been concentrated against the north-

west of France, where afterwards the forces of loyalism put forward so long and so steadfast resistance to the new order, the course of history might have been very different. 'It is in Europe only,' wrote Lord Auckland, 'that the successes of the allied armies and the commanding superiority of our naval force can enable us to compel the French nation to such conditions and sacrifices as may be thought necessary for our future safety and tranquillity.'<sup>1</sup> In any case we must admit that the war, as conducted by the Allies, did not strike a note of very high morality. 'The whole,' wrote Burke in 1796-7, 'has been but one error. It was but nominally a war of alliance. As the continental Powers pursued it, there was nothing to hold an alliance together. There could be no tie of honour in a society for pillage. There could be no tie of common interest when the object did not offer such a division amongst the parties as could well give them a warm concern in the gains of each other, or could, indeed, form such a body of equivalents as might make one of them willing to abandon a separate object of his ambitions for the gratification of any other member of the alliance. 'The partition of Poland offered an object of spoil in which the parties might agree. They were circumjacent and each might take a portion convenient to his own territory. . . . Though hereafter the whole world will have cause to rue this iniquitous measure, they most who were most concerned in it, for the moment there was wherewithal in the object to preserve peace among Confederates in wrong. But the spoil

<sup>1</sup> *Hist. MSS. Com., Dropmore MSS.*, vol. ii. p. 454.

of France does not afford the same facilities for accommodation. What might satisfy the House of Austria in a Flemish frontier afforded no equivalent to tempt the cupidity of the King of Prussia. What might be desired by Great Britain in the West Indies must be coldly and remotely, if at all, felt as an interest at Vienna, and it would be felt as something worse than as negative interest at Madrid. Austria, long possessed with unwise and dangerous designs in Italy, could not be very much in earnest about the preservation of the House of Savoy ; Sardinia, who owed to an Italian force all her means of shutting out France from Italy, of which she has been supposed to hold the key, would not purchase the means of strength on one side by yielding it on the other : she would not readily give the possession of Novara for the hope of Savoy. No Continental Power was willing to lose any of its continental objects for the increase of the naval power of Great Britain ; and Great Britain would not give up any of the objects she sought for as a means to the increase to her naval power, to further their aggrandizement.<sup>1</sup>

It may be said that these were the words of an embittered and broken-hearted old man ; but the sober and unbiassed verdict of history must approve them. The first Lord Malmesbury and Arthur Paget were two of the ablest men connected with eighteenth-century diplomacy, and the diplomat is generally cautious in his judgments. But what was their opinion of the governments to which they were accredited ? In September, 1794, Malmesbury wrote to Paget : ‘ You have done a very essential

<sup>1</sup> Letter II., *op. cit.* pp. 349-351.

service in speaking of the conduct of the Prussian headquarters in the way you did. It is impossible for it to be more disgraceful and barefaced.'<sup>1</sup> In December of the same year Malmesbury wrote to Lord Grenville of the 'weakness, perfidy, insolence, avarice and folly' of the Prussian Government.<sup>2</sup> A few years later Paget wrote (December 11, 1798): 'The conduct of these great German Powers it is beyond my capacity to calculate the wisdom of.'<sup>3</sup> Again (January 15, 1799): 'I have the worst possible opinion of the Cabinet of Vienna, and apprehend that the basest and vilest motives have directed its conduct.'<sup>4</sup>

The first European Coalition against France was brought to an end by the action of Prussia in signing the separate peace of Basle (April 5, 1795).

In 1796 a desperate attempt was made to galvanise it into life, at least to the extent of working for a common peace, by an appeal to the cupidity of the German Powers. It was proposed that Austria should receive Bavaria, and Prussia should receive compensation in Germany, or the Netherlands. George III. protested against these proposals, not from any regard for the Netherlands, but as Elector of Hanover, lest the interests of the small German princes should be injured. Ministers, in fact, had no great faith in the likelihood of any success for

<sup>1</sup> *The Paget Papers, diplomatic and other correspondence of the Rt. Hon. Sir A. Paget*, ed. by his son Sir A. Paget, 2 vols., vol. i. p. 37.

<sup>2</sup> *Diaries and Correspondence of the 1st Earl of Malmesbury*, ed. by 3rd Earl, 4 vols., vol. iii. p. 227.

<sup>3</sup> *Paget Papers*, vol. i. p. 142.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p. 152.

their efforts. Pitt wrote, 'June 23, 1796, 'On the whole my notion is that most likely, either now or a few months hence, we shall be left to sustain alone the conflict with France and Holland, probably joined by Spain, and perhaps favoured more or less openly by the Northern Powers. But with proper exertion we can make our party good against them all.' <sup>1</sup> Still it was worth while to make the attempt at co-operation. Grenville replied to the King in the name of the Cabinet 'that the manner in which the Netherlands shall be settled at the Peace, and particularly the keeping of those Provinces, if possible, out of the possession and dependence of France, are so important for the interests of this country that they ought to form the primary objects of attention in any discussion respecting a continental peace.

'They now see little hope of obtaining this point, either by negotiation or by force, without the intervention of the King of Prussia, in concert with your Majesty and the Emperor.

'And it is not expected that such intervention can be procured, without securing to that Sovereign Power a considerable acquisition of territory in the Netherlands or in Germany.' <sup>2</sup>

The British Government had every reason to dislike and distrust Prussia, whether represented by her weak and profligate King or by his double-dealing and treacherous Ministers, but they were at the mercy of *force majeure*; and it must be remembered that it never entered into the hearts of

<sup>1</sup> *Hist. MSS. Com. Dropmore MSS.*, vol. iii. p. 214.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 228.

eighteenth-century men, to conceive that Prussia might one day become a great Naval Power.

Meanwhile it is interesting to note the opinion of the shrewd American, Gouverneur Morris. 'The moral principles of a Prussian go to the possession of whatever he can acquire. And so little is he the slave of what he calls vulgar prejudice that, give him opportunity and means, he will spare you the trouble of finding a pretext. This liberality of sentiment greatly facilitates negotiation; for it is not necessary to clothe propositions in honest and decent forms.'<sup>1</sup>

The death of Frederick William II., in 1797, and the accession of a young king, reported to abhor the French Jacobin republic, seemed to give an opportunity to restore the coalition against France; but the incurable jealousies of Prussia and Austria stood in the way; and Russia found the task of mediating between them hopeless. Prussia wanted to receive British subsidies and preserve in Northern Germany an attitude of strict neutrality. 'Infinite,' wrote Thomas Grenville, the Foreign Secretary's brother, who had been sent on a special mission to Berlin, 'will be the mischief resulting from this conduct in Prussia, because in continuing to offer to great parts of Germany the specious, though fallacious, appearance of peace and neutrality, while Austria and the South of Germany is separately fighting for its existence, that spirit of division which France is successfully pursuing in Germany

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 232. For the evidence by which Grenville's anonymous correspondent is identified as Gouverneur Morris, see Introduction to volume, p. xliv.

is powerfully assisted, the general means of defence are impaired and lessened, and Prussia becomes by this line of conduct a party to the measures pursued by France in the moment when we are seeking to engage her, under a sense of common danger, in measures of common hostility.' <sup>1</sup> In complying with the Prussian demands 'we should fare like the Irishman in the Jubilee, who got nothing for supper, and was obliged to pay double for it.' <sup>2</sup>

When at length in 1799 the third coalition, consisting of Great Britain, Austria and Russia, took active shape, the want of cohesion between its members reacted of necessity on its military operations. The Austrian Minister Thugut disliked and distrusted the English. The Czar Paul was headstrong to the verge of madness : and the British Ministry seem to have been aiming at objects which they did not disclose to all the members of the Alliance. Thus they entered upon a plan for the union of the Dutch and Austrian Netherlands under the Prince of Orange, without consulting the Austrian Government.

There is an illuminating note of Lord Grenville with regard to the kind of alliance which prevailed between England and Austria. 'The question,' he wrote, 'of making peace but by common consent has been bandied about in all the correspondence between London and Vienna, till there is no more to be said upon it. The great objection to such stipulations is that they do bind us, because we perform our treaties, and that they do not bind

<sup>1</sup> *Hist. MSS. Com., Dropmore MSS.*, vol. iv. p. 490.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 514.

Austria, who broke its engagements with us on this very subject, at Campo Formio, at Leoben, and at Rastadt, or rather at Seltz.

‘It belongs, however, to a more extensive concert than there is yet a prospect of. We may combine our military operations without having combined our political system; and, perhaps, after all that has passed, the former is the best course to be pursued for attaining the latter.’<sup>1</sup>

In this unhappy state of things it is difficult to say whether the policy of statesmen or the strategy of generals was most at fault. The complete failure of the British expedition to Holland made of little interest the various plans for dividing the bear’s skin. The mind of the British Ministers fluctuated greatly with regard to the future of Belgium, when recovered from the French. It was generally held that Austria had by her own conduct forfeited her rights. ‘We conquered and defended them’ (*i.e.* the Austrian Netherlands), wrote Lord Grenville (August 3, 1799), ‘(that is England and Holland did) with our arms and money. We *gave* them to the German branch of the House of Austria, who had a doubtful title and no means of enforcing it but by our aid. We gave them on certain conditions, all of which Austria has broken. We were guarantees of the Constitutions of these Provinces, and had a strong interest, commercial and political, in maintaining them. Austria violated those Constitutions, and by so doing lost the Provinces and ceded them to France by a definitive treaty of peace which she had no power to do without our consent.’<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* vol. v. p. 233.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 235.



The favourite plan was to annex these Provinces to Holland. On the morality of this course, Pitt wrote, September 13, 1799, 'I see nothing in what is proposed that breaks in on our line of probity and morality, or bears the slightest resemblance to the scandalous treatment of Poland and Venice. In both these cases a neutral and unoffending Power was sacrificed to a wanton plan of usurpation. Here a country lost in war by the weakness of its own Sovereign and recovered, without his participation, by the arms of a third Power, is proposed to be retained by the Power, to the advantage of the general system of Europe, and with an equivalent provided for the former sovereign, though not strictly entitled to any.'<sup>1</sup> A more material difficulty in the way was that, at the time, there seemed little desire amongst the Dutch for such an addition of territory.

Lord Grenville, writing to Lord Minto in February, 1800, suggested another solution of the problem. The objection to the Netherlands being attached to Holland was that 'whenever the Seventeen Provinces were connected with France, which would be as often as they had an incapable Stadtholder or a weak Government, we should, in case of war, be as much shut out from the continent as we now are. Whereas the existence of two separate Governments, one in the Netherlands, the other in Holland, will always give us a double chance of keeping our communication open. . . . If we throw upon him<sup>2</sup> by the treaty of Peace the whole burden of the

<sup>1</sup> *Hist. MSS. Com., Dropmore MSS.*, vol. v. p. 396.

<sup>2</sup> *I.e.*, 'a weak Prince, dependent, more or less, on Austria.'

Austrian loans—of which we may perhaps never get any very satisfactory payment from Vienna—we shall compel him to have recourse to us for relief. Why should this not be granted on conditions something resembling those of the old Barrier treaties? Why should we not agree to accept as payment the maintenance of a considerable body of British troops, to be stationed in time of peace as a garrison to the frontier of the Netherlands. We should by these means correct one of the greatest difficulties which belongs to our situation in Europe, that of the great deficiency of our military force in war, owing to the constant reduction of it at the first moment of peace to skeleton regiments, which train neither officers nor soldiers, and drive us, on the breaking out of war, to numberless expedients for sudden augmentations, which incur generally an enormous expense, and give a fresh blow to the composition of our army.’<sup>1</sup>

Inasmuch, however, as the attempted coalition was reduced to nothing by the military genius of Napoleon, the discussion of the question proved to be purely academic. Austria, with no thought of her allies, signed the humiliating peace of Lunéville (February, 1801). The anger of the Czar Paul became more directed against his ally Great Britain than against his enemy France; and Prussia joined the Northern League which had revived the Armed Neutrality of 1780. It was these melancholy events which led to the ineffectual peace of Amiens.

Amongst the grievances that excited Paul, the question of Malta occupied a leading place. By a

<sup>1</sup> *Hist. MSS. Com., Dropmore MSS.*, vol. vi. p. 125.

treaty signed in December, 1798, Great Britain agreed to hand that island over to the Czar as Protector of the Knights of St. John, on its recovery from the French; and as late as June, 1800, assurances were given that this treaty would be scrupulously observed. Meanwhile Napoleon, anxious to placate Paul, offered to hand over the island to him; and the attention given to this offer led the British Government to maintain that they were absolved from their undertaking. The truth was that the British authorities had come to realise the importance of Malta as a basis for sea-power in the Mediterranean. Their action admits of defence; but it undoubtedly gave an opening to those critics who are always ready to sit in judgment on the sins of their own countrymen.

Evidence of the manner in which the war was carried on is shown by the way in which the Peace of Amiens was hastily concluded. Genuine statesmen would have recognised that then, no less than to-day, it was a case of victory or downfall; and that any patched-up peace, that left the source of trouble still active, could only end in disaster. Fortunately the ambition of Napoleon, in again precipitating the conflict, made of less consequence the indiscretion of the British Government. That Peace had not been the work of Pitt. At this crisis of the Empire's history domestic questions still decided the fate of Ministries. The Irish Union, however regrettable may have been the manner of its enactment, was undoubtedly a wise measure, could it have been accompanied by a generous

treatment of the Roman Catholic Church. It must remain a mystery why the conscience of George III., which had acquiesced in the enlightened provisions of the Quebec Act, remained shocked at the idea of a similar policy in Ireland. But the fact remained that the Union Act had to be accepted in a form which caused all the future troubles. On the King refusing to accept the proposals of Catholic Emancipation which had been 'approved by the majority of the Cabinet and regarded as a natural sequel to the Act of Union' (Letter of January 31, 1801), Pitt resigned.

What were Pitt's former views on a premature peace we know from his memorable reply to Tierney, who had asked him to state in one sentence, without *ifs* and *buts*, the object of the War (February 17, 1800) :

'I know not whether I can do it in one sentence, but in one word I can tell him that it is *security* : security against a danger the greatest that ever threatened the world. It is security against a danger that never existed in any past period of society. It is security against a danger which in degree and extent was never equalled ; against a danger which threatened all the nations of the earth ; against a danger which has been resisted by all the nations of Europe, and resisted by none with so much success as by this nation, because by none has it been resisted so uniformly and with so much energy.' . . . 'Peace is most desirable to this country ; *but* negotiation may be attended with greater evils than could be counterbalanced by any benefits which would result from it. And *if*

this be found to be the case; *if* it afford no prospect of security; *if* it threaten all the evils which we have been struggling to avert; *if* the prosecution of the war afford the prospect of attaining complete security . . . then I say that it is prudent for us not to negotiate at the present moment. These are my *buts* and my *ifs*. This is my plea, and on no other do I wish to be tried by God and my country.' <sup>1</sup>

It must be confessed, however, that Pitt himself justified and defended the Peace of Amiens. His speech of November 3, 1801, is well worth reading as showing perhaps the weak places in the armour of that great man. On his first point that, after the dissolution of the Confederacy of the States of Europe, the question of peace or war between Great Britain and France became a question of terms only, all that need be said is that European Confederacies had previously been dissolved, and that Great Britain had found it possible to secure their renewal. Moreover, at the time when the negotiations for peace were opened, the Emperor Paul had just been assassinated, and there was good reason to expect that the new Emperor would be more favourable to a Coalition with England. When, however, Pitt went on to say that, compared with the East and West Indies, the Mediterranean was but a secondary consideration, he gave forth very questionable doctrine. Of course, if peace was necessary it had to be made, but it is strange to find Pitt expressing smug satisfaction over the gain of a few West Indian Islands when the Netherlands remained an annexe

<sup>1</sup> Coupland, *op. cit.* pp. 285-6.

of France.<sup>1</sup> In 1796, when there had been proposals for peace, Lord Grenville had written to Malmesbury: 'You will observe that we are very strongly impressed with the impossibility of listening to any idea of leaving the Netherlands to France.'<sup>2</sup> Austria had surrendered them by the Treaty of Campo Formio (October, 1797), and Great Britain now tamely acquiesced. As was well said, the Treaty of Amiens, was concluded on two principles directly opposite, and, on each, in opposition to British interests. France was allowed to treat upon the *uti possidetis*, while Great Britain was content to negotiate on the *status quo ante bellum*; 'on either principle, solely acted on, the balance of power might have been preserved.'<sup>3</sup>

Pitt's defence of the Treaty was partly explained by his loyalty to his friend and successor, Addington. At the same time Pitt's disciple, Canning, wrote of the Peace of Amiens as 'this most disgraceful and calamitous treaty of peace'; 'never, never to be excused or atoned for.'<sup>4</sup> The best judgment on it is found in the manner in which it came to an end. The equivocal conduct of Great Britain with regard to Malta may have been justified by the general European situation. But there had, in fact, never been anything to lead to the conclusion that, at this stage of the struggle, peace was really possible between France and England; and when, in the

<sup>1</sup> *Speeches of W. Pitt*, vol. iii. pp. 265-81. For a very able criticism of the Peace of Amiens by Lord Minto, see *Paget Papers*, vol. ii. pp. 27-32.

<sup>2</sup> *Diaries of Lord Malmesbury*, vol. iii. p. 338.

<sup>3</sup> *Annual Register*, 1802, p. 166, note.

<sup>4</sup> *George Canning and his Times*, by A. C. Stapleton, p. 69.

following May, war was resumed it was as inevitable as the advance of a flowing tide.

The Peace of Amiens may have been unwise, but at least it involved no betrayal of the interests of other nations. When in the autumn of 1800 Bonaparte had proposed to treat with England for a separate peace, 'the proposition was instantly rejected with a fresh declaration of His Majesty's invariable and unalterable determination to fulfil with punctuality all his engagements, and to treat only in concert with those Allies who continued to make common cause with him in the prosecution of the war.'<sup>1</sup> When the war was resumed the weak Addington ministry was powerless to deal with the situation. In the absence of a spiritual union, the only method of obtaining allies was to offer sufficient bribes. Lord Pelham's plan was to give 'the Low Countries and even Holland to Prussia; all Lombardy to Austria; and to Russia whatever she might ask.'<sup>2</sup>

In this state of things Pitt once more returned to power with the understanding that Catholic emancipation should be left in abeyance. The great act of his last year of administration was the attempt once more to galvanise into life the Confederacy of the European States, by forming a league with Russia, Austria and Sweden against France. The treaty of concert between the King of England and the Emperor of all the Russias signed at St. Petersburg on

<sup>1</sup> *Paget Papers*, vol. i. p. 283.

<sup>2</sup> *Diaries and Correspondence of 1st Earl of Malmesbury*, vol. iv. p. 279.

April 11, 1805, was intended to promote 'the establishment of an order of things in Europe, which may effectually guarantee the security and independence of the different States, and present a solid barrier against future usurpations.' The parties to the League covenanted not to make peace with France but by the common consent of each one of them ; and, meanwhile, to continue the maintenance of their forces ; and, in the case of Great Britain, the payment of her subsidies. By a separate article of the treaty of concert, 'His Majesty the King of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and His Majesty the Emperor of all the Russias, being disposed to form an energetic concert with the sole view of ensuring to Europe a solid and lasting peace, founded upon the principles of justice, equity and the law of nations, by which they are constantly guided, are aware of the necessity of a mutual understanding at this time upon several principles. . . . These principles are in no degree to control the public opinion in France, or in any other countries where the combined armies may carry on their operations with respect to the form of government it may be proper to adopt . . . and finally to assemble, at the termination of the war, a general Congress to discuss and fix the provisions of the law of nations on a more determined basis than unfortunately has hitherto been practicable ; and to insure the observance by the establishment of a federative system calculated upon the situation of the different States of Europe.' <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Annual Register*, 1806, pp. 656-9. The full text of the treaty with all the secret articles is given in an Appendix to *Selected*



This curious and interesting scheme for establishing a new Europe upon a new basis after the war was due to the inspiration of the Czar Alexander. In the preceding January a Russian envoy, Novosiltzoff, had had interviews on the subject with Pitt, when negotiating for a new alliance. Negotiations were also carried on at St. Petersburg, when more mundane considerations were dealt with. In these there was difference of opinion between the Russian and British Governments with regard to the terms England had offered to Prussia and with regard to the position of Malta. 'The extreme importance of securing the co-operation of Prussia to the common concert,' wrote Lord Mulgrave, the Foreign Secretary, to the British Ambassador, Lord F. L. Gower (January 21, 1805). 'renders it highly essential that no effort should be omitted in bringing forward any inducement that may influence Prussia to enter into the common concert, and at the same time to obviate whatever obstacles may arise to the proposal of sufficient temptations to that Power to rouse from its apathy. There is some reason to apprehend that one obstacle to this desirable end may be found in the indisposition . . . of Russia to allow any considerable augmentation of the power and resources of Prussia. . . . The interested and timid policy of the Court of Prussia will naturally lead that Government to weigh with cautious and deliberate attention the value of the dangers and advantages to be derived to her from

*Despatches relating to the third Coalition against France, 1804-1805, ed. by J. Holland Rose. It was not ratified till the following July owing to differences as to Malta and the Maritime Code.*

the double effect of the alternatives of benefits and hostility which she may expect from the contending parties. France will have the advantage of long established influence, and a long confirmed apprehension of her power. She will also have temptations to offer in the Baltic and in the whole of the Electorate of Hanover ; negotiations about which are certainly already in train between France and Prussia and which cannot easily be met by offers equally tempting on the part of the United Powers. The fear, however, of Russia, coupled with the consideration of the greater security of joining two great Powers against one rather than of courting a more equal contest by uniting with France, may probably decide Prussia, provided such an acquisition of territory be proposed as shall add materially to her power . . . To the objections that may be urged at Petersburg against the proposed addition to Prussia, it may be answered that it is in every way more desirable that Prussia should increase towards the middle Rhine and the Netherlands than towards the Baltic ; that although some danger may probably exist . . . to Holland from the near and powerful neighbourhood of Prussia surrounding her ; yet that this and every other danger . . . will be of infinitely less magnitude when threatened on the side of Prussia than if it were to be apprehended from France ; and above all, that the hope of obtaining either emancipation or security for Holland will be incomparably less if Prussia should not enter into the Concert, as without her all active operations in the north of Germany must necessarily be abandoned.’<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> J. H. Rose, *op. cit.* pp. 88-90.

In January, 1805, the British Government proposed as an inducement to Prussia to join in the concert to offer her 'the whole of the Netherlands (not within the line to be drawn from Antwerp to Maestricht) together with the whole of the Duchies of Luxemburg and Juliers and the other territories between the Meuse and the Moselle; and further (if no insuperable objection should be stated), the whole of the country acquired by France on the left bank of the Rhine, eastward of the Moselle.'<sup>1</sup>

These proposals, however, were made in the contemplation of a successful war; and when the Concert put forward the more modest programme of the negotiation of a possible peace, they were modified accordingly. It then appeared an adequate arrangement that Prussia should be put in possession of the fortress of Luxemburg together with such proportion of the Duchy as would form an effectual military line from thence to Maestricht, with the fortresses necessary to be constructed and the whole of the country included within that line, the Meuse, the Moselle and the Rhine.<sup>2</sup>

In October, 1805, Lord Harrowby was sent on a special mission to Berlin. In his Instructions he was told that to 'secure an effectual check to the future encroachments of France . . . and more especially for the future security of Holland, it would be desirable to assign to Prussia a military line of frontier from Antwerp to Luxemburg with such a proportion of territory as may be found sufficient to induce Prussia to occupy that line. . . . To balance this increase of Prussian dominion the

<sup>1</sup> J. H. Rose, *op. cit.* p. 171

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 172.

remaining acquisitions of France (south of a line to be drawn from the Moselle to the Rhine as the Prussian boundary) might be assigned to the Elector of Salzburg. Salzburg might in that case be assigned to Austria, and, in exchange for these advantages, a proportion of the Austrian or Prussian territories in Poland might be assigned as an *arrondissement* to Russia.' <sup>1</sup>

Without other evidence this sentence will be enough to show how little nationalist aspirations entered into the minds of the statesmen of the time. As a further specimen of the international morality prevailing, it should be noted that at the same time when Russia was entering upon an alliance with England she was making a treaty with Prussia by a secret article, of which Hanover, the property of George III. as Elector, was assigned to Prussia.<sup>2</sup>

A clause in the proposed treaty, provisionally agreed upon at St. Petersburg, aroused considerable bitterness in England. It was agreed that, if after every effort the island of Malta could not be obtained for Great Britain, it should be evacuated by the British, and should receive a Russian garrison rather than that the negotiations should be broken off.<sup>3</sup> The British Government at first refused to agree to this proposal. They believed that the security and tranquillity of Europe, which was sought by the proposed alliance, could be most effectually provided for by the continuance of the naval superiority of Great Britain in the Mediterranean. If Russia were to persist in her demand, 'His Majesty

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 212-3.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 232.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 130.

will . . . find himself under the necessity of relinquishing the gratifying prospect of affording immediate relief to the sufferings of Europe, lamenting, however, that a point which appears to His Majesty not only peculiarly essential to Great Britain, but also highly important with a view to the interests of Europe should have been so differently considered by His Imperial Highness as to have frustrated the prospect and entire agreement which so happily prevails between their majesties with respect to the ultimate objects connected with general security.' <sup>1</sup>

The British Government, however, at a later date were prepared, under certain conditions, to assent to this arrangement, provided Minorca could be obtained as a substitute for Malta, although Minorca provided less security against invasion or capture. It was, however, expressly declared in making 'this last sacrifice for the purpose of obtaining security for this continent by negotiation rather than by war,' the offer was 'binding only in the event of a pacific arrangement, and that if the negotiations should not take place or should not prove successful, it should at no future date be made a claim that this important possession should again become matter of negotiation.' <sup>2</sup>

The firmness of the British Government, however, had already prevailed; and the Treaty, as finally signed, contained no mention of Malta.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> J. H. Rose, *op. cit.* pp. 165-6.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 173.

<sup>3</sup> The Russian Government, however, placed on record its opinion that the restoration of Malta would be 'in conformity with the principles of equity and justice' and 'would be the

In all these negotiations, the attitude of British statesmen was clear enough ; more difficult is it to decide upon the conduct of their Russian ally.

Few characters have presented a more difficult problem to the student of history than that of the founder of the Holy Alliance. The grandson of the ruthless Catherine, the disciple of the republican La Harpe, who brought him up on the doctrines of Rousseau, Alexander made his first entry into public life as in effect an accessory to the murder of his father. In all his subsequent career there was the same constant antinomy between the claims of a transcendent idealism and the brutal realities of his time and situation. Alexander was not a hypocrite, because he seemed a different man under different circumstances and influences. He had been born great, and would not otherwise have attained to greatness. The picture of him in Tolstoi's *War and Peace*, unable to put his horse over a ditch, is curiously suggestive. Such a man could not resist the charm and glamour of Napoleon ;<sup>1</sup> and so when the ill-omened Confederacy had been blown to the winds of heaven at the close of 1805 at Austerlitz and finally at Friedland (June 14, 1807), he did violence to his past professions by entering, through the Treaty of Tilsit (July 7, 1807), into a league with France against Great Britain : Russia pledging herself to join France in coercing Sweden, Denmark and Portugal into an adoption

most efficacious means of securing the success of the cause.' (*Memoirs of Prince Adam Czartoryski*, ed. by A. Gielgud, vol. ii. p. 78.)

<sup>1</sup> The historian A. Sorel, however, believed that he was by no means the dupe we are inclined to suppose him.

of the 'Continental System,' directed against the Maritime Supremacy of Great Britain.

There was some excuse for Alexander in the fact that he had received no assistance from England. 'Pitt had died on January 23, 1806, his brave heart at last broken by the news of Austerlitz. The Pilot had not weathered the storm; but at least he had taught England how to save Europe by her example. The Ministry of 'all the Talents,' which followed, at first busied itself in an attempt to make peace. In spite of the friendly relations between Fox, the new Foreign Secretary, and Napoleon, the negotiations ended in failure, those negotiations being mainly remarkable for the loyalty with which England refused to separate herself, in making terms, from her ally Russia. A Russian Envoy was less squeamish; though it is fair to note that the Russian Government repudiated the act of its Emissary. 'During this critical period,' wrote a shrewd judge of men and things, 'when Great Britain was gradually drifting into a position of isolation, the course of Parliamentary history became inseparable from the course of those mighty events on the Continent, which Grenville's Government would fain have treated as outside the sphere of British interests. . . . The leading idea of their policy was non-intervention, and, at the opening of 1807, there was no longer any thought of sending our forces to cope with Napoleon's veterans on the Continent. . . . The notion of making war on a large scale, in concert with allies, on the Continent of Europe, as in the days of Marlborough . . . seems to have vanished from the minds of English States-

men, except Castlereagh, who always advocated concentrated action.'<sup>1</sup> The Will o' the Wisp of South American conquest diverted energies that would have been more wisely concentrated in Europe; and British delays gave a just cause of offence to the European allies. The Treaty of Tilsit was the Nemesis, just or unjust, of such a policy; and the seizure of the Danish fleet by England in a time of so-called peace only proved the truth that weakness begets violence.

With the death of Fox, in 1806, it proved impossible to carry on the Grenville administration, and a new Ministry had been formed with the Duke of Portland as nominal head, Percival as the real leader, and Canning as Secretary for Foreign Affairs. In seizing the Danish fleet, England was but anticipating the proposed action of Russia; and France intended to behave in an exactly similar way towards Portugal. Nevertheless, the act was one incongenial to the traditions of British fair dealing.<sup>2</sup> In spite of the somewhat cynical avowal of Lord G. L. Gower, it is flattering to our past record that more was naturally expected in the way of public

<sup>1</sup> *The Political History of England, 1801-37*, by G. Brodriek, pp. 51-2.

<sup>2</sup> For a very hostile view of the action of the British Government, see Mr. W. Fitzpatrick's Introduction to *Hist. MSS. Com., Dropmore MSS.*, vol. ix, pp. xlv-lvi. Canning's explanation will be found in Stapleton, *G. Canning and his Times*, pp. 129-133. Lord G. L. Gower wrote from St. Petersburg (August 30, 1807), 'The measure is rigorous, and perhaps scarcely reconcilable to the strict rules of justice, but there are questions upon which depend the existence of nations which justify a deviation from the common rule of actions.' (*Lord Granville Leveson Gower (First Earl Granville), Private Correspondence*, ed. by Castalia, Countess Granville, vol. ii, p. 292.)



morality from Great Britain than from other countries. At the lowest scale of international morality stood then, as now, Prussia. It may be, as stated by a writer in the *Annual Register*,<sup>1</sup> that the part which the King of Prussia took against France in 1792 arose from a false persuasion that the re-establishment of the Monarchy was necessary to maintain in Europe the balance of power ; and that, from this point of view, the policy of peace with France could be justified. But what could not be justified was the half-hearted manner in which Prussia joined and betrayed both sides. ‘ When, after the treaties of Lunéville and Amiens, Buonaparte began to make in the midst of peace conquests more important than those which he had achieved during the war. . . . Prussia was the first to guarantee him in the possession of the territories he had seized. . . . When the danger became greater, and Russia strove to bring about a combination of the Powers to oppose Buonaparte’s rapid progress, Prussia was invited to take part in it, but she always declined, at the same time making great professions of impartiality and of attachment to the Emperor’s person. . . . To put further pressure upon Prussia, Russian troops were sent to her frontier ; but the only result was that Prussia protested against being thus threatened, and placed her army on a war footing. While the negotiations were going on, the French defeated the Austrians and entered Prussian territory, arriving as far as Olmütz before the Russians could come to the assistance of their allies. This violation of Prussian territory on the

<sup>1</sup> *Annual Register*, 1806, p. 153.

part of France seemed at first to change Prussia's attitude towards that Power, but she never became an effective member of the Coalition. . . . Prussia made an arrangement with France not only without consulting Russia but even without communicating to her the engagements into which she had entered. The Cabinet of Berlin received from Buonaparte the price of its complaisance. . . . Thus Prussia, while reserving to herself up to the last moment the power of employing the forces of the Allies, only took advantage of their being in the field to make an arrangement with France for her own benefit and to their detriment.'<sup>1</sup> 'The ill-advised and disastrous coalition of 1805 was the touchstone to try the capacity, conduct and decision of the Prussian Cabinet. It was clearly the interest of Prussia to have preserved if possible the peace of the Continent; but, when this was impossible, she should have chosen her side and remained firm to it. For whichever party prevailed, it was easy to foresee that Prussia would be soon reduced to the necessity of fighting with or receiving laws from the conqueror.' In the face of all this Prussia chose to remain neutral; and then took the opportunity to quarrel with France when it was almost too late for her assistance to be of any use. Almost immediately she entered into negotiations with France, which resulted in a treaty by which 'Prussia, from being the friend and ally of the Coalesced Powers and almost the open and declared enemy of France, became the ally of the latter, the guarantee

<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs of Prince A. Czartoryski*, ed. by A. Gielgud, vol. ii. pp. 114-117.

of her conquests in Germany, and her associate in the spoils of the vanquished and baffled coalition.' Prussia received Hanover in return for the cession of these provinces. Well might Fox describe Prussia's conduct as 'the union of everything that was contemptible in servility with everything that was odious in rapacity. Other Nations had been obliged to make cessions to France; but none of them had, like Prussia, been reduced to that lowest state of degradation to consent to become the ministers of the injustice and rapacity of a Master.'

'We have hitherto,' wrote the *Annual Register*, 'contemplated Prussia unsteady and fluctuating in her policy, constant only in her duplicity; professing neutrality at the commencement of the war, though secretly under engagements to France detrimental to the allies; assuming next the character of a mediator, after having concluded a secret treaty with the Coalesced Powers, and obtained the promise of a subsidy from England; and lastly, pretending to negotiate for the neutrality of Hanover, while meditating with unexampled perfidy to appropriate that country to herself. We are now to behold her enraged at the disappointment of her ambitious projects, impatient of the contempt with which she is treated, and goaded on by the universal indignation of her subjects, seeking to retrieve her honour and character by resistance to France, but without wisdom or foresight in her plans, and constant to the last in her dissimulation.'<sup>1</sup>

The distrust of Prussia felt by prescient minds is shown by the language of Paget to Lord Mulgrave

<sup>1</sup> *Annual Register*, 1806, pp. 153-63.

(October 24, 1805): 'Much as I desire the co-operation of that country, I cannot but feel averse to the idea of its being called in *to save Austria*.' <sup>1</sup>

Be this as it may, the new British Government 'found themselves isolated in Europe, confronted with a league between France and Russia, the aim of which was to divide world power between themselves, and with the United States, naturally suspicious, and soon to be made actively hostile by the British policy of retaliation against the measures taken by Napoleon to destroy the British trade. It seemed the darkest hour in English history, but it proved the turning point. 'I own,' wrote Lord Paget (afterwards Marquis of Anglesey), a capable soldier, in July, 1807, 'I now begin for the first time to wish for peace. Prussia is no more, Russia is beaten and dispirited, Austria is yet too weak from former blows, England is weak from the very successes of her arms; for our army is dispersed over the whole face of the globe, keeping possession of countries and colonies that we ought not to possess. I am for peace, a reassembly of our forces, a close union with the natural enemies of France—no great hurry in forming another coalition—I mean by that, no attempt at one in less than three years, and then, the most united, the most formidable, the most energetic one that can be imagined.' <sup>2</sup> At first, indeed, the prospect continued gloomy. It still seemed as though Great Britain was squandering its strength in separate expeditions; and, though the Walcheren Expedition of 1809 is now held to have been on principle defensible, the choice of the

<sup>1</sup> *Paget Papers*, vol. ii. p. 231.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 312.

commander, and his failure to proceed first with the more important business of Antwerp, caused it to end in melancholy failure. The outbreak of a revolution in Spain might well be welcomed as the promise of a better day for Europe, but the event showed that Sir John Moore's expedition had been decided upon without adequate knowledge of local conditions, or of the military obstacles in its path. For these measures Lord Castlereagh was responsible; and Canning seems to have found in their failure the excuse for endeavouring to oust him from office.

In the political history of the time, for the next twelve years these two names stand out prominent. No two men were ever more unlike. Canning was a brilliant and most ready speaker. His mother had been an actress, and there was something in him of the adventurer. His political creed had begun in blind loyalty to Pitt, and there seemed inconsistency in the manner in which he held doctrines apparently pointing in opposite directions. There is no ground, however, for doubting his political honesty; though he was not above intrigue. In any case, in the years 1807-9, in which he was Foreign Secretary, there was no time for a new departure in foreign policy to bear fruit. By his treatment of Denmark, however, and his policy with regard to the Orders in Council, dealt with in another chapter, Canning showed himself not wanting in boldness.

Castlereagh lacked the qualities in which Canning was strong, but had others unknown to Canning. A halting and indifferent public speaker, he was an adroit manager of men. Denounced by his con-

temporaries as the incarnation of all that was benighted, those best qualified to speak are the loudest in their praise of his work at the War Office, and later at the Foreign Office. By a measure of army reform, in 1807 he created a new system, under which Wellington won his victories. 'To have forged such an instrument of war was no mean administrative exploit. To have maintained its efficiency on the whole, though sometimes with a faint-hearted parsimony, and to have loyally supported its Commander against the cavils of a factious opposition superior in parliamentary ability for a period of seven years, must be held to redeem the Tory Government from the charge of political weakness.' <sup>1</sup> It may be added that the historian of the British Army, Mr. John Fortescue, finds in Castle-reagh the one statesman worthy of commendation. His work at the Foreign Office will be dealt with later.

It was the tragedy of Napoleon's position that, in order to succeed in his aim at reducing Great Britain to isolation, he had continually to extend the limits of his European conquests. It has been held by high authorities that even at the time of the Tilsit alliance, Alexander regarded that alliance as a temporary makeshift. But, be this as it may, with Napoleon the avowed champion of the Poles, however hesitating may have been his actual measures, it was impossible that Russia and France should remain permanently allied.

Great Britain was quick to seize the occasion, and in 1812 a renewed treaty between her and

<sup>1</sup> Brodrick, *op. cit.*

Russia gave the foundation to a new European Coalition. The new treaty was silent with regard to the magniloquent declarations of its predecessor. Although acting separately, England and Russia each did its share in the destruction of Napoleon's power. The long wearing down of French military strength in the Peninsular War was in its way as necessary as the more dramatic event of the Russian campaign and its resultant disasters. But even now more was required to complete Napoleon's downfall ; and it was not till the German Powers plucked up courage, under the shelter of the Russian success, to give adequate expression to the feelings that had for some time been agitating their peoples, in behalf of a War of Liberation, that at the battle of Leipsic (October 16-19, 1813) Napoleon's power was wounded to the quick. He was not, as is known to everyone, finally defeated till the battle of Waterloo nearly two years later ; but after Leipsic his strength was never the same.

In comparing the great Napoleonic struggle with that of our own times, there is one striking difference, which is profoundly consoling. We all know how during the present war the relations between the Allied Governments and peoples have every day grown closer and closer. But what a different picture does the past history present. Writing in 1845, the Duke of Wellington declared, with regard to the great Powers, at the commencement of the Revolutionary War in 1793-94-95, and down to the Peace of Amiens, that 'their sole object in communicating with us at all was to obtain money. They negotiated peace, each of them, without

reference to us, although we declared our readiness to cede our *ultra mare* conquests, in order to obtain advantages for the Continental Powers.

‘Look at the conduct when the war recommenced, and England was threatened with invasion, in the commencement of the century. The only apprehension they manifested was that the project for the invasion might fail, and that the French force might be turned against Germany—as it was.

‘But still there was no concert with England on the part of any, till this country showed that she had a force, and was determined to make use of it ; nor, in fact, till the period of the commencement of our successes in the Peninsula.’<sup>1</sup>

It is, perhaps, not presumptuous to suggest that in this passage the great soldier laid too exclusive a stress on the military aspect of the question. It was the spiritual element lacking in the character of the Alliance that was the main secret of its weakness, and of the little hope, moreover, that it held out for the future of the Concert of Europe.

<sup>1</sup> *Sir R. Peel, from his Private Papers*, ed. by C. S. Parker, vol. iii. pp. 408-9.



## CHAPTER V

### THE CONCERT OF EUROPE. 1814-1830

I HAVE dealt in rough outline with British foreign policy as it showed itself during the great war which lasted, with two brief intermissions, from 1793 to 1815. Certain conclusions may be drawn from the facts. Upon the whole the record is a satisfactory one. British statesmen may sometimes have been too much occupied with thoughts of maritime and colonial gains to pursue with sufficient persistency the general interest. Upon the other hand, unless British commerce could survive and extend itself under war conditions, the sinews of war by which alone the common resistance could be maintained would be withered. Mistakes were doubtless made; but they were due to want of understanding or of courage on certain occasions; and there was no instance of the betrayal by England of its allies' interests. It is a moot point how far the seizure of the Danish fleet was an act of political necessity; but in any case the severe criticism which it met proved the high level of the political morality of the day. British principles were summarised by Canning, following Sir J. Mackintosh, as 'respect for the faith of treaties, respect for the independence

of nations, respect for that established line of policy known as the balance of Power, and last but not least, as respect for the honour and interests of this country.' <sup>1</sup> It must be remembered that the idea of nationality as a decisive factor in politics was still in its infancy. Great Britain had welcomed the national rising in Spain, which seemed likely to sweep the French from their ascendancy, and that in Germany, along the lines of which rulers followed ; but Europe was still in the frame of mind that thought natural and, indeed, inevitable proposals for settling the map of Europe, such as that of Pitt in 1805 described above, <sup>2</sup> which took little count of the feelings of the people affected by these political arrangements. But granted that the creed of political morality did not aim very high, it is, in most ways, better to aim low and secure a hit than to shoot aimlessly an arrow into the sky, which in its fall may have consequences other than those intended. England was, we may admit, exceptionally favoured, through being an island : still it is suggestive that in the frequently recurring tergiversations of the time she alone remained constant to her original purpose, ever ready to coalesce with such member of the coalition as would act with her. The Russian autocrat, with power behind him to enforce his creed of a new Europe under the guidance of a higher morality, had proved faithless to his own profession, when he stooped to divide the kingdoms of this world with the denounced usurper. Austria and Prussia showed in all their dealings a cynical disregard for any but their own

<sup>1</sup> *Speeches of G. Canning*, vol. v. p. 5.      <sup>2</sup> *Supra*, pp. 122-3.

private interests, acting as though the word German had no significance. In this matter Prussia, as the weaker and the most unfavourably situated, had the blacker record ; but from neither of these Powers could, at the time, much be expected in the way of securing to a new Europe the paths of peace. Nor did peace bring an improvement. The voice of Russia still meant the *hoc volo, sic jubeo* of a not too wise, though kindly, despot. Austria, under the guidance of Metternich, was steering at full sail to the rapids of 1848. Of Prussia Canning could still write in 1825, ' Why is it that Prussia is so much the most irrational of all the allied Powers, and pronouncing herself always in the most unmeasured and unsuitable terms ? . . . The government of Prussia, why is it of all governments the most ostentatiously unpopular in its politics ? ' <sup>1</sup>

Still, with all its past record of failure and treachery, the Concert of Europe was in 1814 a fact ; and was it not reasonable for statesmen to look to it for preventing a recurrence of the horrors of the two last decades ? So long, then, as it was possible, British statesmen worked for the maintenance of that concert. The first step was to secure a peace that should not leave behind it the seeds of future wars. On this question the attitude of British statesmen was most reasonable. Writing in November, 1813, Lord Castlereagh declared that ' we are not inclined to go out of our way to interfere in the internal government of France, however much we might desire to see it placed in more pacific hands.' At the same time ' we must not encourage

<sup>1</sup> *Some Official Correspondence of G. Canning*, vol. i. p. 286.

our allies to patch up an imperfect arrangement. If they will do so, we must submit ; but it should appear in that case to be their act, not ours.' <sup>1</sup> At the same time Castlereagh was mindful of British interests. In the hands of Napoleon, Antwerp had been 'a loaded pistol held at the head of England.' Accordingly 'I must particularly intreat you,' Castlereagh wrote to Lord Aberdeen, 'to keep your attention upon Antwerp. The destruction of that arsenal is essential to our safety. To leave it in the hands of France is little short of imposing upon Great Britain the charge of a perpetual war establishment. After all we have done for the Continent in this war, they owe it to us and to themselves to extinguish this fruitful source of danger to both.' <sup>2</sup> Castlereagh made very clear the reasons for the decision to annex the Low Countries to Holland, which afterwards proved so fruitful a source of trouble :

'It is quite clear that the prevailing wish of the people of Flanders is to return under the dominion of the House of Austria. The Emperor has been quite explicit in declaring . . . that he cannot in justice to them or to himself embark in the defence of provinces so distant from the mass of his dominions.

'This inclination would perhaps have led them, in the next place, to look to a separate system under an Austrian Prince ; this we have all considered as inconsistent with the preservation of their independence. They begin to understand that to be free they must be strong ; to be strong they

<sup>1</sup> *Correspondence, Despatches and other Papers of Viscount Castlereagh*, ed. by his brother, vol. ix. p. 74.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

must be incorporated into a large system, and under proper arrangements and securities. Holland is the connexion which, failing in their being retained by Austria, there is every reason to suppose will be the most acceptable and congenial to the sentiments of the people.' <sup>1</sup> Again : ' There is but one opinion that to make Holland and Belgium capable of sustaining a real independence upon the confines of France, they must form one State. To this system, evidently wise and necessary in itself, the good sense of both countries will speedily accommodate.' <sup>2</sup>

So long as British security could be made good, Castlereagh was inclined to be very forbearing in his demands from France. The restoration of the French colonies and the continued recognition of the French fishing rights in Newfoundland, under the Treaty of Paris, have often been represented as the outcome of the ascendancy of ignorant and short-sighted statesmanship. In fact, these measures were due to a deliberate and carefully conceived policy, viz. to restore France to a dignified position in the Concert of Europe, and to encourage her maritime and colonial interests, so that she should not concentrate her forces on continental dominion. As an example of Castlereagh's moderation, take his remarks to Lord Liverpool (April 19, 1814), ' I still feel doubts about the acquisition in sovereignty of so many Dutch Colonies. I am sure that our reputation on the Continent as a feature of strength, power and confidence is of more real moment to

<sup>1</sup> *Correspondence, Despatches and other Papers of Viscount Castlereagh*, ed. by his brother, vol. ix. p. 354.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 356.

us than an acquisition thus made.' <sup>1</sup> It is interesting to note Castlereagh's attitude towards the new trend of political opinion throughout most of Europe. 'It is impossible,' he wrote in May, 1814, 'not to perceive a great change coming on in Europe, and that the principles of freedom are in full operation. The danger is that the transition may be too sudden to ripen into anything likely to make the world better or happier. We have new Constitutions launched in Spain, Holland and Sicily. Let us see the result before we encourage further attempts.' Gallio-like, he thought it 'better to retard than to accelerate the operation of this most hazardous principle which is abroad.' <sup>2</sup> At the same time he cannot justly be accused of being a reactionary: 'I am glad to hear,' he wrote to Sir H. Wellesley on the Spanish question (May 10, 1814), 'that the King is not disposed . . . to aim at the restoration of the ancient order of things. I am confident that there is not vigour and ability enough amongst his adherents to sustain such a system against the temper of the times and the party which exists in Spain favourable to a form of Government more or less free. . . . To succeed in establishing a permanent system we must speak to the nation and not give it the character of a military resolution.' <sup>3</sup>

Meanwhile, in the difficult negotiations both before and after the return of Napoleon from Elba, England proved a tower of strength to the cause of moderation and reasonableness. Whereas Alexander was an uncertain factor, apparently anxious to pose as the saviour of the French people against everyone

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 474.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* vol. x. p. 18.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 25

else, and the Germans, especially the Prussians, were determined to crush France completely, Great Britain, through the mouth of Castlereagh (August 17, 1815), declared that it was 'not our business to collect trophies, but to try if we can bring the world back to peaceful habits. I do not think this to be compatible with any attempt now materially and permanently to affect the territorial character of France, as settled by the Peace of Paris; neither do I think it a clear case (if we can, by imposing a strait waistcoat upon that Power for a number of years, restore her to ordinary habits, and weighing the extraordinary growth of other States in later times, especially of Russia) that France, even with her existing dimensions, may not be found a useful rather than a dangerous member of the European System.'<sup>1</sup> Castlereagh clearly recognised that 'neither Austria nor Prussia have any desire to bring the present state of things to a speedy termination; so long as they can feed, clothe and pay their armies, at the expense of France, and put English subsidies into their pockets besides, which nothing can deprive them of previous to the 1st April, 1816, but the actual conclusion of a treaty with France, you cannot suppose they will be in a great hurry to come to a final settlement.'<sup>2</sup> With regard to Prussian methods, both Castlereagh and the Duke of Wellington were most emphatic. Unless something were arranged, the former wrote in March, 1815, 'the war will either degenerate, as it did

<sup>1</sup> *Correspondence, Despatches and other Papers of Viscount Castlereagh*, ed. by his brother, vol. x. p. 490.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 485.

last year, into an indiscriminate pillage or *we* shall be bankrupts and driven out of the field.’<sup>1</sup> Again, a few months later (July 18): ‘The immediate difficulty is how to keep Blücher and the Prussians within any bounds towards this town.’<sup>2</sup> Blücher wished Napoleon to be killed; whilst Wellington protested against ‘so foul a transaction.’<sup>3</sup>

Still, whatever the national behaviour, Castlereagh continued to recognise in Prussia a natural bulwark against French aggression. ‘I am always led to revert,’ he wrote from Vienna (October 1, 1814), ‘with considerable favour to a policy which Mr. Pitt, in the year 1806, had strongly at heart, which was to tempt Prussia to put herself forward on the left bank of the Rhine more in military contact with France. I know there may be objections to this, as placing a Power, peculiarly military, and consequently somewhat encroaching, so extensively in contact with Holland and the Low Countries. But as this is only a secondary danger, we should not sacrifice to it our first object, which is to provide effectually against the systematic views of France to possess herself of the Low Countries and the Territories on the left bank of the Rhine—a plan which, however discountenanced by the present French Government, will infallibly revive whenever circumstances favour its execution.’<sup>4</sup>

Practical statesmen must provide for the immediate need, and there is nothing in Castlereagh’s attitude towards Prussia which need cause us to deny him the gifts of political wisdom.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 286.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 419.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 386.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p. 144.



Assuredly his aims, as stated by himself, were enlightened. 'It is the province of Great Britain,' he wrote to the British Minister at Berlin (December 28, 1815), 'to turn the confidence she has inspired to the account of peace, by exercising a conciliatory influence between the Powers rather than put herself at the head of any combination of Courts to keep others in check. The immediate object to be kept in view is to inspire the States of Europe, so long as we can, with a sense of the dangers they have surmounted by their Union . . . to make them feel that the existing Concert is their only perfect security against the revolutionary embers more or less existing in every state of Europe; and that their true wisdom is to keep down the petty contentions of ordinary times and to stand together in the support of the established principles of social order.'<sup>1</sup>

'The wish of the Government,' he had written more than a year earlier (February 6, 1814), 'is to connect their interests in peace and in war with those of the Continent . . . that whilst the state of Europe afforded little hope of a better order of things, Great Britain had no other course than to create an independent existence for herself, but now she might look forward to a return to ancient principles, she was ready to make the necessary sacrifices on her part to reconstruct a balance in Europe.'<sup>2</sup> The treaty of Alliance the Government had already decided (December, 1813) 'is not to

<sup>1</sup> *Correspondence, Despatches and other Papers of Viscount Castlereagh*, ed. by his brother, vol xi. p. 105.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by Alison Phillips, *op. cit.* pp. 68-9, note.

terminate with the war but is to contain defensive engagements with mutual obligations to support the Power attacked by France with a certain extent of stipulated succours. The *casus foederis* is to be an attack by France on the European dominions of any one of the contracting parties.' It will be noted that these proposed stipulations are only directed against France.

It was in this atmosphere of general recognition of the European Concert and of its attendant obligations that Alexander launched his high-soaring balloon for securing a temporal Providence for the ills of the suffering nations. In 1813, 'Russia,' in the words of Sorel, 'un chained the war of nationalities.' In appealing to the principle of nationality, 'Alexander had no conception of the power and tendencies of the forces he was unloosing—forces which were destined to mingle with the air his day dream of a Confederated Europe.'<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile Alexander declared his plan to be 'to restore to each nation the full and secure enjoyment of its rights and its institutions; to place all, including ourselves, under the safeguard of a general alliance, in order to guarantee ourselves and to save them from the ambitions of a conqueror.'<sup>2</sup>

It is unnecessary to recapitulate here the various difficulties that threatened to put an end to the European Concert, but at last an agreement was reached, and the Treaty of Chaumont created, within certain limits, a Confederation of Europe. The Preamble declares the object to be, in case France should reject the proposals for a general

<sup>1</sup> Alison Phillips. *op. cit.* p. 60.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 64-5.

Peace, 'to strengthen the mutual obligation existing between them for the vigorous prosecution of a war which is designed to relieve Europe from its long sufferings and to secure its future repose, by the re-establishment of a just balance of power; and, on the other hand, in case Providence should bless their peaceful views, to agree on the best means of securing the happy result of their exertions against every future attack.' The 16th article of the treaty declared: 'As it is the object of the present treaty of defensive alliance to maintain the balance of power in Europe, to insure the repose and independence of the different Powers and to prevent the arbitrary violations of the rights and territories of other States, by which the world has suffered for so many years together, the contracting Powers have agreed to fix the duration of the present treaty for twenty years.'<sup>1</sup>

About the same time the Allied Powers solemnly affirmed: 'It is time that Princes, without alien influences, should look after the welfare of their peoples; that the Nations should respect their mutual independence. . . . The progress of events during this epoch has given to the Allied Courts sentiments of all the strength of the European League. . . . Nothing remains to prevent their expressing the conditions necessary for the reconstruction of the Social Edifice. . . . England, the only Power called upon to place anything in the balance of compensation for France, has announced the sacrifice she is prepared to make for the general pacification.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Annual Register*, 1814, pp. 387-90.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by Alison Phillips, *op. cit.* p. 80

The first Peace of Paris merely embodied principles already accepted, leaving more doubtful points for subsequent settlement. In the Congress of Vienna (1814) which followed, Great Britain was the only one of the Powers which was able consistently and firmly to take up an attitude wholly disinterested and European. With untiring industry and no little skill, Castlereagh sought to untie the tangled knots of the questions relating to Poland and Saxony. 'It depends exclusively,' he wrote to the Czar, 'upon the temper in which your Imperial Majesty shall meet the questions which more immediately concern your own Empire, whether the present Congress shall prove a blessing to mankind or only exhibit a scene of discordant intrigue and unlawful scramble for power. . . . Give to Europe that Peace which it expects at your hands.'<sup>1</sup>

How thin was the ice of the 'Concert of Europe' may be seen from the fact that Castlereagh, whilst the Congress was still sitting, 'feared some sudden coup on the part of Russia and Prussia to coerce Austria,' and protested that, since the Powers were no longer deliberating 'in a state of independence,' it would be better to break it up. So grave was the peril that Castlereagh felt himself constrained as a precautionary measure to enter into a defensive alliance with Austria and France.<sup>2</sup> The conclusions of the Vienna Congress were not very striking; on the questions of Poland and of Saxony compromises were arrived at, largely through the influence of Castlereagh; but the Congress, in the words of Gentz, 'resulted in nothing

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 109.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 113.

but restorations which had already been effected by arms.' Still, according to him, 'the Treaty, such as it is, has the undeniable merit of having prepared the world for a more complete political structure. . . . The ground has been prepared for building up a better social structure.'<sup>1</sup>

When, after Napoleon's final defeat at Waterloo, it was necessary once more to review the situation, the adroit management of Castlereagh secured that Russia and Great Britain stood combined against the attempts of Prussia to effect the dismemberment of France. 'By the course I adopted,' he wrote, 'towards His Imperial Majesty, I not only deprived him of that character of being the *exclusive* protector of the King (Louis XVIII.)—a relation in which, for the general politics of Europe, it is of great importance he should not be permitted to place himself—but I have gradually brought him publicly to adopt all the principles of the Allied Powers as his own, and to push them, as far as it is at all clear they can be pushed without a dangerous reaction.'<sup>2</sup>

But, under the influence of religion and a mystic Egeria,<sup>3</sup> Alexander was prepared to go much farther than merely to give generous terms to France; he proposed, by the Holy Alliance (September 14), to apply the law of Christ to international relations. Professor Alison Phillips has clearly brought out that in its inception the alliance involved no attack upon popular liberties. As late as 1816 Alexander

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Alison Phillips, *op. cit.* pp. 118-9.

<sup>2</sup> *Castlereagh Correspondence*, vol. x. p. 485.

<sup>3</sup> The Baronne Julia de Wietinghoff Krüdener.

wrote to Castlereagh : 'There are countries where the attempt is now being obstinately made to revive institutions which have perished of old age. The new spirit of the peoples is too little consulted.'<sup>1</sup> 'The sole and exclusive object of the Alliance,' he wrote in the same year to his ambassador in London, 'can only be the maintenance of peace and the union of all the moral interests of the peoples. . . . Its only aim is to favour the internal prosperity of each State and the general welfare of all, which ought to be the outcome of the friendship between their sovereigns, made all the more indissoluble by the fact that it is independent of accidental causes.'<sup>2</sup> The actual terms of the treaty between Russia, Austria and Prussia seem a mere assertion of the sublime teaching of Christianity to an unconverted world ; but the very vagueness of the language carried danger. The British Government was not prepared to be a member of this mystic partnership, though the Prince Regent privately gave it his blessing. In consequence there were two forms of alliance. There was first the inner ring of the Holy Alliance. There was, secondly, the more general alliance which renewed the treaties of Chaumont and Vienna and affirmed, 'in order to consolidate the intimate tie which unites the four Sovereigns for the happiness of the world, the High contracting Powers have agreed to renew at fixed intervals . . . meetings consecrated to great common objects and the examination of such measures as at each one of these epochs shall be judged most salutary for the peace and prosperity of the

<sup>1</sup> *Castlereagh Correspondence*, vol. x. p. 149, note.    <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 150

nations and for the maintenance of the peace of Europe.'<sup>1</sup> This treaty was signed on November 20, 1815.

In accordance with the plan of settling matters by means of periodic conferences, the Conference of Aix-la-Chapelle was held in the autumn of 1818, primarily to deal with the question of putting an end to the occupation of France by the Allied Armies. Castlereagh wrote on October 20th. 'It is satisfactory to observe how little embarrassment and how much solid good grow out of these reunions which sound so terrible at a distance. It appears to me to be a new discovery in the European government, at once extinguishing the cobwebs with which diplomacy obscures the horizon, bringing the whole bearing of the system into its true light, and giving to the counsels of the Great Powers the efficiency and almost the simplicity of a single state.'<sup>2</sup> It is curious to note that even as late as this the Holy Alliance had not shown its reactionary tendencies. Otherwise Castlereagh would hardly have written of Alexander (October 4): 'my persuasion is that he means to pursue a peace policy—that he aims at sway, but that he has no desire to change his connexion, or to render the revolutionary spirit in Europe more active.'<sup>3</sup>

But Castlereagh's colleagues, with the fear of Parliament before their eyes, were seriously alarmed at the idea of adjourned meetings of the European Concert 'at fixed points.' The objection of the Cabinet was not to the system but to the expediency

<sup>1</sup> *Castlereagh Correspondence*, vol. x. p. 155.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* vol. xii. pp. 54-5.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 48.

of declaring it publicly. The objections, however, of Canning were more serious. He thought the 'system of periodical meetings of the four Great Powers new and of very questionable policy ; that it will necessarily involve us deeply in all the politics of the Continent, whereas our true policy has always been not to interfere except in great emergencies, and then with a commanding force.' He thought 'that all other States must protest against such an attempt to place them under subjection ; that the meetings may become a scene of cabal and intrigue ; and that the people of this country may be taught to look with great jealousy for their liberties, if our Court is engaged in meetings with great despotic Monarchs, deliberating upon what degree of revolutionary spirit may endanger the public security, and therefore require the interference of the Alliance.' <sup>1</sup> The same apprehensions were shown in a letter of Lord Liverpool (October 23rd). 'The Russians must be made to feel that we have a Parliament and a public, to which we are responsible : and that we cannot permit ourselves to be drawn into views of policy wholly incompatible with the spirit of our Government.' <sup>2</sup>

In truth the question was one of extreme difficulty. On the one hand there was the danger that, by withdrawing from the European Concert, Great Britain might be working against the interests of the permanent peace of the world. On the other hand there was the very real peril of being drawn into enterprises wholly foreign to British interests or sympathies. A singularly acute criticism of

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 55-6.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 63.



the whole system is found in a letter of Lord Clancarty, the British Minister at the Hague, to Castlereagh : ' What a fortunate circumstance it is that the Queen's state has enabled you to be at Aix during the whole of the reunion there. However much I will allow you are to be pitied for the struggles you have been involved in by the modern philosophic rhodomontade, coupled with an eternal *besoin de faire* of one Court and the pusillanimity of another, while you have, I believe, found little true assistance from the Minister of the third, always fluctuating and generally weak and wrong-headed in his determinations when made ; though I think Parliament can scarcely find fault with your accession to the proposed system, the invitation to which is certainly flattering to Great Britain, and marks the weight attached to her countenance, and this without subjecting her to any onerous stipulation, yet I wish the subject had not arisen or could be still avoided altogether. Things seem to me to stand well as they were, and I fear the doing more will produce weakness rather than strength to those who really seek the permanence of peace and the best means of defence in the case of war.

' In truth, I do not well understand the projected measure. What is to be the state of the parties *inter se* under it ? It should seem that they cannot go to war with each other, because the principal object is to maintain peace, and because the natural consequence of war between Continental Powers, in the vicinage of each other, is invasion, and then the *casus foederis* arises in favour of the invaded party, whose territories are guaranteed, and this

however wrong he may have been in the outset. But if they cannot vindicate themselves, each against the other, must not some mode be assigned for settling disputes between them? None such is stated; and, if means for this purpose were brought forward, would not the association thus raised erect itself into a Confederation of States equally with the Germanic body? And what would be the effect of this? Again the parties agree to confine themselves within their actual limits—does the *casus foederis* arise if they exceed them? If so, they are equally tied up from making war on others. Would this be wise, or even practicable? If, on the other hand, without impeachment from his confederates, any one of the parties may make war upon other States, then, as conquest is a natural right of war, this part of the engagement becomes a dead letter, or at most an honourable understanding, of little value. . . .

‘These and several other equally important considerations on the construction, bearing and possible effects of such a measure, it would be well for the immediate parties maturely to reflect upon, previously to their entering upon such an engagement. To prevent probable future interferences from some among them, and avoid misunderstandings, loose construction should of all things be avoided. The more simple and the less multiplied the means by which the great Powers are kept together for mutual defence and the preservation of peace, the less likelihood there will be, in my view, of interruption to their Union.’<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Castlereagh Correspondence*, vol. xii. pp. 81-2.

The aim of Alexander at the Conference of Aix-la-Chapelle was to extend the Holy Alliance so as to include the whole European Concert. Castlereagh reported that both the Emperor and his Minister 'were in conversation disposed to push their ideas very far indeed, in the sense of all the Powers of Europe being bound together in a common league, guaranteeing to each other the existing order of things, in thrones as well as in territories, all being bound to march, if requisite, against the first Power that offended either by her ambition or by her revolutionary transgressions.'<sup>1</sup> We have already seen the fatal objection from the British point of view to any such proposal. There was the less moral objection that it opened an easy way to Russian ambitions. In these circumstances it became necessary to meet by a Memorandum the Russian proposals. 'The benign principle of the Alliance of September 26, 1815,' Castlereagh wrote, 'may be considered as constituting the European System, in the matter of political conscience. It would, however, be derogatory to this solemn act of the Sovereigns to mix its discussion with the ordinary diplomatic obligations which bind State to State, and which are to be looked for alone in the treaties which have been concluded in the accustomed form. . . .

'The problem of a Universal Alliance for the peace and happiness of the world has always been one of speculation and hope, but it has never yet been reduced to practice, and if an opinion may be hazarded, from its difficulty it never can. But you

<sup>1</sup> A Phillips, *op. cit.* p. 177.

may in practice approach towards it, and perhaps the design has never been so far realised as in the last four years. During that eventful period the Quadruple Alliance, formed upon principles altogether limited, has had, from the presence of the Sovereigns and the unparalleled unity of design with which the Cabinets have acted, the power of travelling far out of the sphere of their immediate and primitive obligations, without, at the same time, transgressing any of the laws of Nations or failing in the delicacy which they owe to the rights of other States, as to form more extended alliances . . . to interpose their good offices for the settlement of differences between other States, to take the initiative in watching over the Peace of Europe, and finally in securing the execution of its treaties.<sup>1</sup> Then follows the memorable passage with regard to the impossibility of intervening in the internal affairs of independent States which has been quoted on a previous page.<sup>2</sup> The practical suggestion which the Memorandum contained was that France should be added to the Quadruple Alliance. This proposal was accepted by all the Powers.

Whatever may have been the possibilities of a new Europe, actuated by obedience to a higher law, such hopes were rudely dispelled by the action of the various Governments. The restored Monarchies had learnt nothing from the lesson of the last twenty years, and in Spain and Italy threw their peoples into the hands of the revolutionists. Alexander, who had been in favour of Constitutions,

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 181-2.

<sup>2</sup> *Supra*, p. 100.

so long as they were given from above to deserving children, changed his tone when his own Poles, under harsh treatment, grew restive and disloyal. Good use was made of the opportunity by Metternich, whose game was to exploit the Czar's vague idealism for the objects of practical and brutal reaction. In this state of things the position of a British Government was, indeed, difficult. It had, it must be admitted, no glowing enthusiasm for nations struggling to be free, but it was no less resolutely determined not to be swept into the cobwebs of the spider of reaction. 'If,' Castlereagh said, 'it is desired to extend the Alliance so as to include all objects present and future, foreseen and unforeseen, it would change its character to such an extent and carry us so far, that we should see in it an additional motive for adhering to our course, at the risk of seeing the Allies move away from us without our having quitted it.'<sup>1</sup>

About the same time the mutiny of a picked regiment at St. Petersburg had further driven Alexander into the reactionary camp; and, at the Conference of Troppau, held in October, 1820, he and Metternich were, for the first time, of one mind. At this Conference Great Britain and France were only represented by subordinate officials; and the three crowned heads had it all their own way. The outcome of their deliberations was the minatory statement: 'States which have undergone a change of government due to revolution, the results of which threaten other States, *ipso facto* cease to be members of the European Alliance, and remain excluded from

<sup>1</sup> A. Phillips, *op. cit.* p. 217.

it until their situation gives guarantees for legal order and stability. If, owing to such alterations, immediate danger threatens other States, the Powers bind themselves, by peaceful means, or, if need be, by arms, to bring back the guilty State into the bosom of the great Alliance.' <sup>1</sup> Great Britain naturally refused to be a party to any such undertaking: 'As for the idea,' Castlereagh wrote '... of some general, systematic and solemn declaration to be agreed upon and promulgated, this is, in effect, a revival of those discussions with regard to the establishment of a general system of guarantee, not merely territorial but political, which, at Aix-la-Chapelle, were laid aside by common consent from the extreme difficulties in which the whole subject was involved.' <sup>2</sup>

'It is proposed,' he wrote at a later date, 'to create a confederacy for the exercise of a right which, though undoubtedly appertaining, upon the principles of self-defence, in extreme cases, to each particular State, has never yet as a general measure been made the subject of a diplomatic regulation or conjoint effort. . . . There are extreme rights to which nations, as well as individuals, must have recourse for their preservation, and for the exercise of which no legislation can provide. The extreme right of interference between nation and nation can never be made a matter of written stipulation or be assumed as the attribute of any alliance.' <sup>3</sup>

The Conference was adjourned to Laibach; but with no different results. The general effect of these Conferences was that a triple understanding

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 222.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 223-4.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 226.

was effected between Russia, Austria and Prussia which bound them to carry forward their own views, in spite of any difference of opinion that might exist between them and the two Constitutional Powers, Great Britain and France. 'The first acts of Troppau,' wrote Lord Stewart, the British delegate, 'framed an alliance between the three Courts which placed them entirely in a new attitude from us, and they have now, I consider, hermetically sealed their treaty before Europe.'<sup>1</sup>

One of the last efforts of Castlereagh's<sup>2</sup> diplomacy was to dissuade the Emperor of Russia from entering the field on behalf of the revolted Greeks. Castlereagh was not wanting in sympathy with the Greek cause; but he feared any dislocation of the existing balance of power and the infectious character of military proceedings. In a striking dispatch to the British Minister at St. Petersburg (December 24, 1821) he described the general situation. He sought to impress Alexander with 'the wide and increasing spread of the revolutionary movement throughout the American, as well as the European, Continent. The events of the last few months in Mexico, Peru, the Caraccas and the Brazils have nearly decided that both the Americas should swell the preponderating catalogue of States administered under a system of government founded upon a representative or democratic basis. The like spirit has been advancing in Europe with rapid strides; Spain and Portugal are in the very vortex of a

<sup>1</sup> A. Phillips, *op. cit.* p. 232.

<sup>2</sup> He was now Marquess of Londonderry

similar convulsion. France fluctuates in her policy between extreme views and interests, both in their very nature seriously and, perhaps, equally menacing to her internal tranquillity. And Italy, including the King of Sardinia's dominions, though for the time recovered from the grasp of the revolutionists, is held only by the presence of an Austrian army of occupation and makes but very slow progress, it is to be feared, in reconstructing such a native system of government as may be competent to maintain against the Revolutionists an independent existence.

'The same spirit has deeply mixed itself in the affairs of Greece. The insurrection throughout European Turkey, in its organisation, in its objects, in its agency and in its external relations, is in no respect distinguishable from the movements which have preceded it in Spain, Portugal and Italy, except in the additional complications and embarrassments which it presents from being associated with the evils and mischiefs of another system of misrule, under the odium of which it seeks to cloak its real designs, to excite an interest, and thus to effectuate its final purpose.'<sup>1</sup> In these circumstances 'the Emperor of Russia ought to disavow the Greek cause as one become essentially revolutionary.'<sup>2</sup>

From the copious extracts from his correspondence here given, we can recognise of what nature were the services that Castlereagh rendered to his country. If, as was the case, he was not in advance of the public opinion of his day, and sometimes lagged behind it, he was invariably straightforward, fearless and quick to grasp the

<sup>1</sup> *Castlereagh Correspondence*, vol. xii. pp. 443-4.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 445.



European situation. The political reputation of England stood very high owing to her services in the Great War; but undoubtedly the behaviour of Castlereagh succeeded in increasing that reputation. But in labouring for his country he had drawn too recklessly on his own powers; and his suicide, in August, 1822, ended a career to which justice was never done until the last few years.

His successor, the brilliant and showy Canning, was a man of a very different stamp.<sup>1</sup> So far as actual policy was concerned, there was no great gulf fixed between the two statesmen. The Duke of Wellington attended the Congress of Verona in 1822, though under strict limitations, which, however, only carried on Castlereagh's policy. The Congress of Verona saw the last appearance of a British statesman at a Conference of the great Powers emphasising their Union. From the point of view of the Concert of Europe the result was disappointing; but considering the attitude taken up by the members of the Holy Alliance, it was inevitable. It is unnecessary to refute at this time of day the silly fiction of Canning's official biographer, that Castlereagh and the Duke of Wellington were

<sup>1</sup> Lord Malmesbury, who knew Canning intimately, thus described him in 1803: 'Canning has been forced, like a thriving plant in a well-managed hot-house; he has prospered too luxuriantly, he has felt no check or frost. Too early in life, he has had many, and too easy advantages. This, added to very acute parts, makes him impatient of control. Astonished to find obstacles and difficulties in his way, angry with those who conceive less quickly and eagerly than himself, or who will not keep with him in his rapid plans and views; and, indulging an innate principle of vanity, he underrates others and appears arrogant and contemptuous, although really not so.' (*Diaries, etc.*, vol. iv. p. 169.)

not really in sympathy with the policy they were compelled to advocate. What can be stronger than Wellington's language? 'With us, therefore, it had become a principle not to interfere in the internal concerns of any foreign country except in a case of necessity, being convinced that we could not interfere with advantage to such country or with honour to ourselves.'<sup>1</sup> 'I dislike,' he wrote to Canning (November 19, 1822), 'the Spanish mutiny, revolution, and everything that has been the consequence as much as anybody, but I dislike still more the conduct of the French Government' (in wishing to suppress these things by force), 'and I should be sorry that we were supposed to be parties to it.'<sup>2</sup>

In fact no one except the great Duke could have secured to the unpopular opinions he advocated so respectful a hearing: in the face of French ambitions, Europe did not altogether escape a Spanish war. Nevertheless Canning's words held good: 'I verily believe that if we escape the Spanish war, it will be owing exclusively to your experience of one; and that any other negotiator but yourself would have reasoned *politically* and *morally* against it to no purpose.'<sup>3</sup> Wellington's claim may have been well founded, on the facts of the past history, 'that whatever we spoke, our language was cautious and measured, because we were determined to perform, and we knew we must perform, what we promised;' but the distrust and jealousy of England was so great that

<sup>1</sup> *Despatches, etc.* (1819-1832), vol. i. p. 344.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 545.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 536.

even from him such language was borne with difficulty. Meanwhile it was something that the autocrat of all the Russias should hear with patience views directly contrary to his own with regard to the best methods of dealing with the danger of Jacobinism and revolution. Alexander was in himself 'the whole Russian Government';<sup>1</sup> but he easily fell under the sway of others. The whole truth of the matter was summed up by Wellington when he wrote :

'I had seen great difficulties overcome by these Conferences ; and I was in hopes that upon this occasion, as upon former occasions, truth and good sense might at last have prevailed. . . . But there are points of difference in our situation at present compared with that in which we stood before. First the three great military Powers, particularly the Emperor of Russia and King of Prussia, as well as their ministers, and all their diplomatic servants, and likewise those of the Austrian Government are much more displeased and irritated with the line which the British Government took on the Neapolitan question than the occasion calls for. They consider that it was an unnecessary display and publication of a difference of opinion upon a theory. This notion is quite erroneous ; but it is entertained generally. Then another opinion prevails upon this same subject, viz. that having been obliged to separate from England on these revolutionary questions, and having experienced no inconvenience from such separation, their best chance was to proceed on their own line.' Moreover a change of

<sup>1</sup> *Despatches etc.* (1819-1832), vol. i. p. 566.

Ministers in Russia had thrown Russia into the arms of Metternich ; but 'in order to maintain the description of influence which he has acquired over his Imperial Majesty's Councils, he is obliged to bend his own opinions, and to guide the conduct of the Austrian Government in a great degree according to the views of Russia.

'Thus, although there is no diminution of confidence in the Russian Government, there is no concert nor union of counsel or of action.'<sup>1</sup> In this state of things, it cannot be denied that, however gloomy might be the consequences in a remote future, the Concert of Europe had for the time being become an impossibility. At the moment, however, the full extent of the breach was hardly realised. In answer to an inquiry from the King we find the Cabinet writing in January, 1825: 'Your Majesty's servants feel it to be their duty therefore to state that they fully recognise the principles of policy laid down in 1814, 1815 and 1818, in the sense given to them repeatedly by your Majesty's plenipotentiaries. . . . With respect to the future application of these principles, your Majesty's servants are deeply impressed with the obligation of preserving your Majesty's engagements in the sense in which they have been declared on the part of your Majesty, and with the advantages which may result from maintaining the system of confidence and reciprocal communication established with your Majesty's Allies.'<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that Canning was a party to this communication ; though he added to it a separate reply.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 567-8.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 403

Nevertheless the Duke of Wellington recognised :  
 ' There is a growing disinclination in this country to connect its concerns with those of the Alliance to a greater degree than is rendered necessary by the exact terms of our treaties. This sentiment prevails among moderate well-judging men to as great a degree as among political adventurers and fanatics. . . . The allies ought to be aware of these facts, and ought to shape their measures in such a manner as to carry this country with them, which is at least as necessary for their interest and welfare as it is for ours.' <sup>1</sup>

The agreement arrived at between Russia, Austria, Prussia and France with regard to coercing Spain caused the withdrawal of Wellington from the Conference, and Canning wrote to Sir H. Wellesley at Vienna (September 16, 1823) that England was under no obligation ' to interfere herself or to assist, abet, or approve the interference of any other Power by force or by menace in the internal concern of independent nations. . . . The rule, I take it to be, that our engagements have reference wholly to the state of territorial possession settled at the Peace ; to the state of affairs between nation and nation ; not . . . to the affairs of any nation within itself. . . . I thought the public declarations of my predecessor . . . had set this question entirely at rest. . . . What *is* the influence which we have had in the Counsels of the Alliance, and which Prince Metternich exhorts us to be so careful not to throw away ? We protested at Laybach ; we

<sup>1</sup> Letter to Metternich (May 4, 1824), *op. cit.* p. 260 ; see also letter to Metternich (February 24, 1824), *ibid.* pp. 222-5.

remonstrated at Verona. Our protest was treated as waste paper ; our remonstrances mingled with the air. . . . Our influence, if it is to be maintained abroad, must be secure in the sources of our strength at home ; and the sources of that strength are in the sympathy between the people and the Government ; in the union of the public sentiment with the public counsels ; in the reciprocal confidence and co-operation of the House of Commons and the Crown. . . . Our business is to preserve the peace of the world, and therefore the independence of the several nations which compose it. In resisting the Revolution in all its stages from the Convention to Buonaparte, we resisted the spirit of *change*, to be sure, but we resisted also the spirit of *foreign domination*. But separate them, or still more, array them against each other, and the most strenuous and consistent anti-revolutionist may well hesitate which part to choose.' At the same time England was sincerely desirous of maintaining the alliance and of cultivating it for its real object and purpose, that of preserving the settlement of Europe, and the independence of the States which it comprehends.<sup>1</sup>

The real difference between Castlereagh and Canning was that the one valued the European Concert and clung to it so long as he could, while the other wrote exultingly to the British Minister at St. Petersburg on January 3, 1823 : 'I am afraid your Excellency will owe me a grudge for the issue of Verona, which has split the one and indivisible alliance into three parts as distinct as the Constitutions of England, France and Muscovy.

<sup>1</sup> Stapleton, *G. Canning and his Times*, pp. 374-82.

. . . And so things are getting back to a wholesome state again. Every nation for itself and God for us all. Only bid your Emperor be quiet, for the time for Areopagus and the like of that is gone by.' <sup>1</sup>

The one practical result of the Holy Alliance, so far as England was concerned, was to strengthen the determination that, if France under its aegis was allowed to coerce the revolutionary principle in Spain, the Spanish Colonies at least should not come under the shadow of its influence. British motives were largely mercenary. A lucrative commerce had grown up with the revolted Colonies, free from the restrictions of the Spanish law, and the British Government did not intend that this new source of gain should be dried up by any action of the Continental Powers. In the August of 1823 Canning proposed to the American Minister in London that the British and United States Governments should come to an understanding, so as to oppose a united front to any encroachment by Spain's continental supporters. Canning was not yet prepared formally to recognise the independence of the Spanish Colonies. The American Government for a time appears to have considered favourably the idea of joint action with Great Britain; but finally the view prevailed that was advocated by the Secretary of State, John Quincy Adams; and the 'Monroe doctrine' proclaimed to the world that henceforth America must belong to the Americans; and that no interference would be allowed

<sup>1</sup> Stapleton *G. Canning and his Times*, pp. 369-70. In an earlier letter he had written. 'You know my politics well enough to know what I mean, when I say that for Europe I shall be desirous now and then to read England.' (*Ibid.* p. 364.)

on the part of European Powers in the affairs of the American States.

After the assertion of the Monroe doctrine, no attempt was made by any European Power to interfere with the Spanish Colonies; and Great Britain recognised the independence of Buenos Ayres, Colombia and Mexico in 1824, and the rest soon after.

Canning himself somewhat ludicrously claimed the independence of the Spanish Colonies as a triumph of his policy.

Twitted in the House of Commons (December 26, 1826) with having failed to repel French aggression, directed against Spain, Canning made the amazing reply: 'Was there no other mode of resistance than by a direct attack upon France, or by a war to be undertaken upon the soil of Spain? What, if the possession of Spain might be rendered harmless, as regarded us, and valueless to the possessors? Might not compensation for disparagement be obtained, and the policy of our ancestors vindicated, by means better adapted for our present time? If France occupied Spain, was it necessary, in order to avoid the consequences of that occupation, that we should blockade Cadiz? No. I looked another way; I sought materials of compensation in another hemisphere. Contemplating Spain, such as our ancestors had known her, I resolved that if France had Spain, it should not be Spain "*with the Indies.*" I called the new world into existence to redress the balance of the old."<sup>1</sup> The Spanish American possessions won their liberties by

<sup>1</sup> *Speeches*, vol. vi. p. 111.



their own exertions, aided, no doubt, by many individual Englishmen; and the action of Great Britain was only to recognise them, when her own trade interests made the decision necessary.

In reading the speeches of Canning, we are sometimes a little jarred by a note of exaggeration. Nevertheless, his own policy seems to have been in its essence moderate and reasonable. He believed that 'the next war in Europe would be a war not so much of armies as of opinions.' In this state of things the attitude of Great Britain should be one of 'neutrality between conflicting principles,' 'letting the professors of violent and exaggerated doctrines on both sides feel that it is not their interest to convert an Umpire into an adversary.'<sup>1</sup> Even here he was guilty of some grandiloquence, when he compared England to Aeolus, in whose custody were the winds of Heaven.

Still, it is necessary to keep in mind the prestige that attached itself to Great Britain through the years that followed the close of the great war. It was British sea-power that had given time for the European Concert to do its work. It was British subsidies that had made possible the continued resistance of the Continental Powers. The Peninsular War had developed a powerful army and a great general, so that, even on land, England had played an important part in effecting Napoleon's downfall. No doubt it was owing to this that the great Continental Powers suffered patiently at their meetings the presence of colleagues so alien to them in temper and sympathies. Moreover,

<sup>1</sup> *Speeches*, vol. vi. p. 90.

after more than two decades of exhausting war, it was natural that men of all modes of thought should regard peace as indispensable. That peace, in fact, remained on so precarious a footing was due to the new leaven which was beginning to work in the European body politic. The treaties of the past were well fitted to keep the respective Powers within their due limits and to maintain the European balance of power; but they were helpless before the new principle of nationality, which was beginning to move the minds of men. Without perhaps, always realising the consequences, Canning, a man whose public being depended upon parliamentary government, gave vent to sympathies which, as we have seen, his settled policy refused in some cases actively to support. A very able statement of his views is contained in the letter to Sir H. Wellesley already quoted: 'It would indeed be a strange perversion of all that was settled at the Peace that the treaties and engagements which we consider as providing for the state of territorial possession exclusively should not only be construed to relate to the internal affairs of nations as well as to their external safety . . . but to relate to the former so much more than to the latter that an encroachment upon national independence, which *per se* would have constituted a *casus foederis* . . . should become not only innocent, but regular, if following as a consequence from internal interference. . . . Now, as to our influence upon the Continent. If such a war as we sustained for (with a single intermission) a quarter of a century, in behalf of all Europe, and by turns against all Europe in its own behalf,

has not taught all Europe where they are to look for protection against overgrown and overbearing power, I am sure no part we could take in a Congress upon an insurrection of Carbonari at Naples or of Freemasons at Madrid, would acquire for us the confidence which such a war had failed to command. Let the occasion come, and Prince Metternich shall see ! But it is not by perpetually courting occasions, it is not by incessant meddling with petty interests and domestic squabbles in other countries that the influence of Great Britain is to be maintained. On the contrary, it is more likely to be frittered away by such restless questions, and to be found exhausted or disabled from acting when the real occasion may arise.' <sup>1</sup>

The death of Canning in 1827 perhaps made less change in foreign policy than his admirers have contended. The Duke of Wellington, who succeeded him as Prime Minister, whatever his domestic policy, was in foreign affairs no reactionary ; and carried on the Castlereagh tradition without the liberal sympathies and aspirations of Canning.<sup>2</sup>

Whatever the sympathies of British statesmen with the cause of Greek independence, fear of Russia and the consequences that might arise from her 'mediation,' continued to exercise a chastening influence. Almost the last public act of Canning was to come to an arrangement with Russia and France for the settlement of the Greek question.

<sup>1</sup> Stapleton, *G. Canning and his Times*, pp. 375-7.

<sup>2</sup> It is true that reactionary views abound in Wellington's correspondence ; but in action he was careful not to offend the public opinion around him.

Under this arrangement Greece was to pay a tribute to the Porte, in return for self-government.<sup>1</sup> The Turks, however, having found a strong leader in Ibrahim Pasha, the son of the capable and ambitious ruler of Egypt, were not prepared to learn their lesson. A conflict between the fleets was precipitated, and the battle of Navarino (October 20, 1827) practically decided the question of Greek independence; though how little that result was the outcome of British statesmanship may be seen from the fact that the King's Speech (January 29, 1828) described the battle of Navarino as 'a collision wholly unexpected by his Majesty' and as 'this untoward event.'<sup>2</sup> The difficulty was that it was still thought possible to maintain 'the repose of Europe upon the basis on which it has rested since the last general treaty of peace.' In accordance with an additional Article of the Treaty of 1827 occasional conferences were held of the Representatives of the three Powers, Great Britain, Russia and France, which had signed the Treaty. The Conference of 1830 determined that Greece should be wholly independent of the Porte, and that it should be governed by a Prince who should not belong to the reigning family of any one of the Signatories to the Treaty.

<sup>1</sup> See Text of Protocol of April 4, 1826, and subsequent Treaty of July 6, 1827, in *The European Concert in the Eastern Question*, by T. E. Holland, pp. 5-9.

<sup>2</sup> The Duke of Wellington wrote to Lord Eldon (December 1, 1827): 'I quite agree with you respecting the melancholy affair of Navarino.' (*Op. cit.* vol. iv. p. 164.) At a later date (August 15, 1830), he wrote to Dean Philpotts: 'The truth is that the battle was fought by our admiral under false pretences.' (*Ibid.* vol. vii. p. 171.)

A proposal to make Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg Sovereign Prince broke down, through his refusal of the terms offered ; and in 1832 Otho, the second son of the King of Bavaria, became Sovereign of Greece with the title of King.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE GROWTH OF NATIONALISM; THE PECULIAR CHARACTER OF ANGLO-FRENCH RELATIONS. 1830-53.

THE year 1830 marks a new departure in British foreign policy, not so much because the temper of British statesmen altered, as because the circumstances of Europe underwent a great change. Lord Palmerston, who became Foreign Secretary in that year, was the pupil and follower of Canning ; and, as we have seen, there was no broad gulf between the policy of Canning and that of Castlereagh and Wellington ; but the modified revolution in France which led to the expulsion of the elder branch of the Bourbon family and to the establishment of the middle class Monarchy of Louis Philippe had the immediate result of ranging Europe into two strongly opposed camps.

The first outcome of the change in France was the outbreak of a rebellion in the Low Countries. Opposed in religion, language and sympathies, the Belgian and Dutch peoples had never at heart agreed with the political system set up by the European Concert, as the necessary means for securing their political liberties against France. Whether,

had their point of view been seriously considered at the Congress of Vienna, some form of federal Union might not have met the difficulty while securing the military objects justly aimed at, is a question that it is perhaps idle now to ask. In 1830 such a solution was no longer possible. But what then could be done? The Belgian people were in some cases inclined to throw in their lot with a reformed France. To acquiesce in this solution would have meant the undoing of the work of the Napoleonic War. Lord Aberdeen, who, when the rebellion occurred, was still Foreign Secretary, wrote: 'If the affair should be settled in the manner which is desired by the authors of the revolt, we cannot conceal from ourselves that it will be a virtual annexation of the Province by France. Is this country, or any party in this country, prepared to submit to such a result? We may do what we please, but I feel confident that, sooner or later, we shall find in the Netherlands the cause of war. Fortunately it will be a good one.'<sup>1</sup> On the other hand it was out of the question that the King of Holland should be given military support with a view to holding down unwilling subjects. The task of British diplomacy was to secure a peaceful settlement and prevent a conflict between France, supporting the Belgian people, and the three other Powers, coming to the aid of the monarchical principle. The situation was sufficiently dangerous, because, when Holland refused the terms agreed upon by the Powers, France proceeded to enforce them by arms. When the Revolution occurred, the Tories were in

<sup>1</sup> *Sir R. Peel*, vol. ii. pp. 159-60.

office in England ; but the Duke of Wellington's statement that neither Great Britain nor France could attempt to pacify the parties alone, but that the work must be accomplished by the five great European Powers in Concert, expressed the general sentiment of British statesmen.<sup>1</sup>

The Duke of Wellington informed a Belgian envoy that 'it never had been the intention of England to interfere in their affairs, and that we would not control Belgium in any manner in the choice of its government.' Without assistance from outside the King of Holland was unable to resist French coercion, whilst the situation at home prevented Prussia or Russia, in any case, from intervening.

In August, 1831, Lord Palmerston wrote to Lord Granville, the British Ambassador at Paris : 'The French Government are perpetually telling us that certain things must or must not be done in order to satisfy public opinion in France ; but they must remember that there is a public feeling in England as well as in France ; and that although that feeling is not as excitable upon small matters as the public mind in France, yet there are points (and Belgium is one) upon which it is keenly sensitive, and upon which, if once aroused, it would not easily be appeased.'<sup>2</sup> In England, at any rate, there was no response to Talleyrand's cynical suggestion, that the only remedy to the Belgian difficulty lay in partition between France, Prussia and Holland ; England's share being the recognition of Antwerp

<sup>1</sup> *Annual Register*, 1830, p. 154.

<sup>2</sup> H. Lytton Bulwer, *Life of Palmerston*, vol. ii. p. 100.



as a free port.<sup>1</sup> Palmerston gauged the public temper aright when he wrote (August 17, 1831) 'one thing is certain—the French must go out of Belgium or we have a general war, and war in a given number of days.'<sup>2</sup> 'Let us stave off all these nibblings,' he wrote a few days later; 'if once these Great Powers begin to taste blood, they will never be satisfied with one bite, but will speedily destroy their victim.'<sup>3</sup>

From the first the Duke of Wellington viewed with extreme misgiving Palmerston's proceedings. 'It is quite true,' he wrote (November 14th, 1832), 'that France and England united are too strong for the rest of the world. But what are the objects of the Union? Are they French objects exclusively, or English objects, or European objects? The answer is obvious. French objects exclusively. Look abroad at this moment. Holland, Portugal, Spain, Italy, the Mediterranean; all tending to the establishment not only of French influence but of French supremacy and rule. . . . We have no objects in Europe or elsewhere excepting the independence and tranquillity of all; particularly the independence of France. The object of France is dominion—dominion to be acquired anyhow. . . . How can two such Powers, with such different objects, continue in alliance?'<sup>4</sup>

The Duke held that the King of Holland had been unfairly treated by the Powers. 'It appears,' he wrote (November 22, 1831), 'that the Five Powers

<sup>1</sup> H. Lytton Bulwer, *Life of Palmerston*, vol. ii. p. 102.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 109.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 122.

<sup>4</sup> *Despatches, etc.* vol. viii. p. 445.

have concluded a Treaty with Leopold, which I confess astonishes me. I did not think it possible that the Emperor of Austria would conclude till the King of the Netherlands should be satisfied. It appears to me that there is a clear injustice in that part of the arrangement which regards the canals, communicating from the Scheldt with the Meuse and the Rhine. They are Dutch property ; and the other allies had no more right to dispose of them by sentence under an arbitration than they had to dispose of any private property not at their disposition.' <sup>1</sup>

In December, 1832, the Duke of Wellington sent to Lord Francis Leveson Gower an elaborate statement with regard to the Belgian question : ' The King of the Netherlands, after the repulse of Prince Frederick from Brussels, in October, 1830, asked for the advice and assistance of the Powers which had been parties to the union between Holland and Belgium to maintain their work.

' These Powers met by their plenipotentiaries in conference in London, and their first step was to require a suspension of hostilities between the parties. They did not take as the basis of the Act the "*Uti possidetis*," but they allotted to the Dutch armies all that formed the territory of Holland previous to 1792-3, and to the Belgian army the remainder of the territory forming the kingdom of the Netherlands. The Duchy of Luxembourg was considered as part of the Germanic body.

' This arrangement was nothing but a suspension of hostilities. The Conference dictated the Treaty

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 75.

to the two parties ; but our Government declined to guarantee its execution by either, knowing that such guarantee might lead to war. The King of the Netherlands agreed to the treaty, so did the Belgian Government, but unwillingly. Under this Treaty, Antwerp would have belonged to the Belgians ; the Scheldt to the King of the Netherlands, as well as Venloo and the Meuse and certain territories on both banks of that river.

‘ We resigned on the 15th of November ; on the 22nd the new Ministers took possession of their offices. They immediately commenced by ill-treating the King of the Netherlands. They enforced the suspension of hostilities as against him, but not in his favour. The exchange of the citadel of Antwerp for Venloo and territories upon the Meuse . . . was never carried into execution. Hostilities continued in the neighbourhood of Antwerp and of Maestricht. Remonstrances were made, threats of hostilities, and the blockade of the Belgian ports, if not desisted from. But all in vain. These continued until the King of the Netherlands invaded Belgium in the summer of 1831.

‘ In the meantime the Conference of London, on the 20th of December, 1830, recognised the independence of the Belgian provinces ; thus giving up at once to one party all that it had to contend for, and leaving to the other all the sacrifices to be made to complete the settlement between them. They, then, in January, 1831, in the twelve Protocols, proposed as Mediating Powers the basis of an arrangement for the separation of the two States, Holland and Belgium. This basis was declared irrevocable

upon three separate occasions. The King of the Netherlands accepted it ; the Belgian Government did not.

‘At this period, *i.e.* in May, 1831, Leopold was elected King of Belgium ; and then the Conference proposed another basis for the separation of the two States, instead of the *irrevocable one* of January. To this basis the King of the Netherlands refused his consent ; the King of the Belgians gave his. . . .

‘In order to repel the various breaches of the Act suspending hostilities, the King of the Netherlands invaded Belgium in the summer of 1831.

‘Subsequently to the invasion, repelled by the French troops, there was a fresh negotiation for the suspension of hostilities between Holland and Belgium, at first for a limited period. . . . Subsequently, in the autumn of 1831, the Conference, which up to that time had been mediatorial, took upon itself the character and assumed the course of arbitrators. They proposed to the parties the Treaty of November, 1831, again declared to be their irrevocable decision. The King of the Netherlands declined to give his consent to this Treaty. Some changes were made in this irrevocable Act, and King Leopold signed it. The Treaty with Leopold was ratified by England and France in January, 1832. It was not ratified by the other Powers till a later period, and then only on condition that the Treaty should be modified in favour of the King of the Netherlands, on some of the principal points of which he complained.’<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Despatches, etc.* vol. viii. pp. 482-4.

‘The history of the world,’ Wellington concluded, ‘does not afford another chance of abandonment of its ally, as has been given by this country, in the whole course of this transaction from the 22nd November, 1830, to the present moment.’<sup>1</sup>

Looking, however, at the question in a broad light, it is impossible not to admire Lord Palmerston’s diplomacy. His aim was to satisfy the aspirations of the Belgian people, whilst he maintained the balance of power and the peace of Europe.

At the European Conference held in London, the frontiers of Belgium and Holland were defined on January 20, 1831, and Belgium was declared to be neutral, under the guarantee of the Powers. There was trouble with Belgium, with Holland, with France, and with the Northern Powers, and it was the firm and skilful hand of Palmerston which guided the European Conference through a sea of dangers to the creation of a free and independent Belgium.<sup>2</sup> It was not, indeed, till 1839 that a satisfactory settlement was at last reached; and whatever might be the value on paper of the guarantee of the Powers, it was impossible to deny that the new barrier State was much weaker than that formed under the settlement of 1815. The barrier fortresses were dismantled, it being impossible for Belgium, by itself, to maintain them; and it was not till a short time before the war of 1914 that the Belgians came to recognise that the maintenance of their independence must rest in great measure with themselves.

<sup>1</sup> *Despatches, etc.* vol. viii. p. 485.

<sup>2</sup> *England and the Orleans Monarchy*, by J. Hall, p. 143.

More serious for the time being were the general effects of the new movement. The back wash of the revolutionary movement was felt in many parts of Germany; and the Polish insurrection assumed serious dimensions. Whatever be the truth regarding Poland, and granting the fact that that kingdom at its zenith was in truth a narrow and oppressive oligarchy, grinding down subject races,<sup>1</sup> it still cannot be denied that Alexander, under his Polish friend and adviser, Prince Czartoryski, recognised the *Kingdom* of Poland, and the Treaty of Vienna (June 9, 1815) guaranteed to the respective Polish subjects of Russia, Austria and Prussia 'representative and national Institutions,' 'regulated,' it was added, making the guarantee an unmeaning absurdity, 'according to the degree of political consideration that each of the Governments to which they belong should judge expedient and proper to grant them.'

Unhappily the friendly intentions of Alexander were from the first thwarted and made of none effect by the harsh and brutal conduct of his brother Constantine, the Viceroy of Poland. When the insurrection broke out, and at first seemed attended with success, it was natural that it should arouse the sympathies of the Western nations. But inasmuch as the matter was not a *casus belli*, and any interference would have aroused fierce opposition from Prussia and Austria, no less than from Russia, it was a foolish as well as useless proceeding for Palmerston to annoy the Russian Government by

<sup>1</sup> See a brilliant article by Lord Salisbury in *Quarterly Review*, April, 1863, republished in *Essays*, 1905.

a dispatch, however closely reasoned, which had to remain *brutum fulmen*. Had Alexander been still Czar, and had the British Ministers, whom he had known and esteemed, been still at the helm, something might have been attempted by personal action ; but a generation was growing up less mindful of British services to Europe : and the stern and silent autocrat Nicholas was not the man to submit himself meekly to liberal manifestos from a Parliamentary Minister. Nothing was gained for Poland ; and the task of British diplomacy was made more difficult.

We find Palmerston writing in 1836 : ‘ Every day brings fresh proof of the complete union of the three Powers (Russia, Austria and Prussia) on every question of European policy, and affords additional evidence that they are for the present, what they told us three years ago they must be considered, viz. a Unity. . . . The division of Europe into two camps . . . to which you so much object, is the result of events beyond our control ; and is the consequence of the French Revolution of July. The three Powers fancy their interests lie in a direction opposite to that which we and France conceive ours to be placed. The separation is not one of words, but of things ; not the effect of caprice or of will, but produced by the force of occurrences. The three and the two think differently, and therefore they act differently, whether it be as to Belgium or Portugal or Spain.

‘ The separation cannot really cease till all the questions to which it applies are decided—just as it is impossible to make a Coalition Ministry while there are questions pending in which public men

disagree. But when Ançillon (the Prussian Minister) and Metternich complain of the division of Europe into two camps, that which they really complain of is not the existence of two camps, but the equality of the two camps. The plain English of it is that they want to have England on their side against France, that they may dictate to France as they did in 1814 and 1815; and they are provoked beyond measure at the steady protection France has derived from us. But it is that protection which has preserved the peace of Europe. Without it there would long ago have been a general war.' <sup>1</sup>

As showing how little the Whig Ministry were conscious of a change of policy, we may note that when, in the same year, the Eastern Question again became critical, through the action of Mehemet Ali, which seemed to threaten the very existence of the Turkish Empire, they turned to the Duke of Wellington for advice in the hour of need. The question was whether or not it would be advisable to enter into any treaty for the defence of the Porte. The Duke's reply is a singularly illuminating document: 'In respect of the Porte, I am afraid that it would be found that a treaty for its protection must be one of interference in all its concerns. I believe that, in general, defensive treaties . . . between a strong Power . . . and a

<sup>1</sup> *Lord Melbourne's Papers*, ed. by L. C. Sanders, pp. 337-40. 'England,' Tallyrand had written (November 27, 1830), 'is the country with which France should cultivate the most friendly relations. Her colonial losses have removed a source of rivalry between them. . . . Both Governments have adopted the principle of non-intervention. Let both declare loudly that they are prepared to maintain peace, and their voices will not be raised in vain.' (Hall, *op. cit.* p. 22.)



weak Power . . . have been found to be treaties of protection ; and that they do and must lead to interference on the part of the strong Power in every act of the Government of the weak Power in relation to other Powers. If such interference should not take place, the question of peace or war would not be in the hands of the strong Power, the one which would have to incur the greatest risks and nearly the whole burthen of the charges.' Considering the special circumstances of Turkey, he believed that 'either the treaty of protection would be of no avail to the Ottoman Porte ; or it must lead as certainly to war as a treaty offensive and defensive with the same Power would.' After giving objections to inviting France to become a party to such treaty, Wellington went on : 'We must not conceal from ourselves that the treaty of protection of the Porte would be considered, and indeed is in fact a treaty of offensive alliance against Russia, be its form what it may. Russia is the only Power excepting England and France that can injure the Porte. It is with Russia alone that the Ottoman Government has questions of interest. That Government is now under the protection of Russia ; and the object of the treaty would be to substitute the protection of England and France for that of Russia. Metternich would see clearly that this substitution could not be made without war ; and I think that in a war between the Maritime Powers and Russia there can be no doubt that Austria would take the part of the latter.' He therefore came to the conclusion that there was no remedy but time. 'It might be possible to re-establish at

the Porte confidence in our intentions ; so that when the period of the expiration of the defensive treaty with Russia arrived, it should not be renewed.’<sup>1</sup>

In Spain, where the Whigs altered the policy of their predecessors so far as to enter into the quadruple Treaty (April 22, 1834) between Great Britain, France, Spain and Portugal, and to repeal the provisions of the Foreign Enlistment Act so as to encourage British volunteers to take part on behalf of the Constitutional cause against the Carlists, the new departure did not prove a success. The old relations between England and Portugal might justify interference on behalf of the young Queen Donna Maria against her reactionary uncle, Dom Pedro ; but natural as it was that England should prefer in Spain the cause of Christina to that of the Carlists, none the less armed support violated that principle of non-intervention in the affairs of independent nations, which the Western Powers had nailed to their mast. Palmerston’s object in entering into the Treaty was no doubt to prevent French influence being predominant in Spain, an object which would most effectually be promoted by the encouragement of liberal tendencies. But if this was so, how could he expect that Louis Philippe would see eye to eye with him in his policy ? According to Villiers, the British ambassador, ‘we were assisting Spain in alliance with France, when France was assisting her enemy.’<sup>2</sup> Moreover, de Lacy Evans, the leader

<sup>1</sup> Sanders, *op. cit.* pp. 343-6.

<sup>2</sup> *Life and Letters of the 4th Earl of Clarendon*, by Sir H. Maxwell, vol. i. p. 131.

of the British volunteers, and his men were a failure. 'Under paid and half starved,' we are told, 'the British Contingent did little, and the war dragged on'; whilst co-operation with France ended by the French withdrawing their garrisons and showing Carlist sympathies. Villiers, the future Foreign Secretary Lord Clarendon, attributed the Spanish difficulties more than anything else to the conduct of Louis Philippe, who played false 'diabolically.'<sup>1</sup> But whatever the cause, the effect was none the less deplorable.

In spite of the general tendency for the Western Powers to be in sympathy on questions of European politics, when, once more, there was a serious risk of war over the Eastern Question, Russia and Great Britain were at one in their determination to support Turkey against Mehemet Ali; and France seemed inclined to take the other side. Wellington approved of Palmerston's policy; but he added that the present situation, occasioned by the tone and armaments of France, was most critical and dangerous, and that every effort ought to be made to bring her once more into the Alliance of the Great Powers.<sup>2</sup> A comparison between the available naval forces of the two Powers produced the humiliating confession that, for the time being, superior force in the Mediterranean lay with the French navy.<sup>3</sup>

In 1832 proposals had been made by the Porte for the conclusion of an alliance between England and Turkey; but whatever may have been his own

<sup>1</sup> *The Greville Memoirs*, vol. iii. p. 328.

<sup>2</sup> *Melbourne Papers*, p. 461.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 464-5.

inclinations, Palmerston was unable to give his assent to these proposals.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, the attitude of Russia was completely misunderstood in England. In 1829, when the Peace of Adrianople was concluded, the view was adopted by Russia that, on the ground that no Power could have a better neighbour than a weak State, the preservation, not the destruction, of Turkey should be the object of Russian policy.<sup>2</sup> In accordance with this view, Russia was strongly opposed to the aggrandisement of Mehemet Ali; and in tendering assistance to the Porte (1833) was not actuated by ulterior motives. Nevertheless, distrust of Russia largely contributed to the acquiescence by the Porte in the demands made by Mehemet Ali with regard to Syria and Adana. By a secret clause, however, of the treaty of July 8, 1833, between Turkey and Russia, the Porte agreed, 'upon demand and in accordance with the principle of reciprocity,' to close the Dardanelles to the warships of all nations; <sup>3</sup> the tacit understanding being that Russia should possess the right of passage to and from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean, which she had obtained by the treaty of September 23, 1805. A combined protest was made against the new treaty by the representatives of England and France.

Meanwhile, a treaty between Russia, Austria and Prussia, signed on October 15, 1833, had sought in some measure to revive the principles of the Holy Alliance. 'Should one of the three Courts see fit to render material aid to any Sovereign, and should such action be opposed by another Power, the three

<sup>1</sup> *England and the Orleans Monarchy*, by J. Hall, pp. 155-6.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 156.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 163-4.

Courts would consider any interference of the kind in the light of an act of hostility directed against them all.'<sup>1</sup> The boldness, however, with which the duc de Broglie met the claims of the reactionary Powers caused them to evaporate in smoke. A further agreement, signed on September 18, between the Czar and the Emperor of Austria, was of much greater importance. Under this the two Powers pledged themselves to combine for the preservation of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>2</sup> Had this undertaking been made known to the Western Powers, much unnecessary bitterness and suspicion might have been prevented.

Relations between England and Russia were improved during the brief period in 1834 when the Duke of Wellington acted as Foreign Secretary. Whereas Broglie and Palmerston had been in favour of opening the Dardanelles to the fleets of all the Powers, Wellington aimed at their closure to the warships of all the nations.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, he strongly objected to the instructions by which it was in the power of the British ambassador at Constantinople to call upon the Mediterranean Squadron to enter the Dardanelles. 'It was not fitting,' he wrote, that 'the King's ambassador should have the power of placing the country in a state of war with another Power.'<sup>4</sup> The wisdom of Wellington's views was recognised by Palmerston on his return to the Foreign Office.

The downfall of Broglie in 1836 and the accession to power of Thiers caused a tension in the relations

<sup>1</sup> *England and the Orleans Monarchy*, by J. Hall, p. 167.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 168.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 222.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted *ibid.* p. 223.

between France and England. The grandiose schemes of Thiers made possible war between France and Turkey ; and therefore French interests seemed to demand the strengthening of the Sultan's unruly vassal, Mehemet Ali. The dominance, on the other hand, of Mehemet Ali in Arabia was a direct menace to British interests in India, and the occupation of Aden (January, 1839) was a necessary countermove. Unhappily the situation was further complicated by British distrust of Russian intrigue in Persia and Afghanistan. With Russia threatening India and with the possibility that ' France in alliance with Spain and Mehemet Ali might be enabled to realise Napoleon's dream of converting the Mediterranean into a " French lake," ' <sup>1</sup> the prospect was indeed threatening for British interests.

Russia, however, was less hostile in her views than was thought, and on July 27 the Russian minister became a party to the *Collective Note*, by which ' agreement among the five Great Powers on the question of the East was secured.' By this agreement the treaty of Unkiar-Skelessi was destroyed and the days of Russia's exclusive control of Turkey brought to an end. <sup>2</sup>

This object being accomplished, Palmerston was free to devote his energies to the curtailment of Mehemet Ali's power. The situation would not be satisfactory till Syria was completely restored to the Sultan's authority. The position of France, on the other hand, after becoming a party to the *Collective Note*, was very difficult. She had been for some time intriguing with Mehemet Ali, and the French

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 237.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 248.

admiral seems to have connived at the surrender to him of the Turkish fleet,<sup>1</sup> but now the French representative had given his formal assent to Mehemet's possible coercion.

In this state of things Palmerston's path was made easy by the unexpected attitude of the Russian Government. Baron Brunnow was sent on a special mission to London, bringing tidings of great joy. Not only did Russia cordially assent to Palmerston's view that Mehemet must be excluded from Syria, Arabia and Crete, and declare that any military assistance given by Russia to Turkey should be based not on the terms of the treaty of Unkiar-Skelessi, but on the general engagements of the European Powers : she further consented to accept 'as a permanent principle and standing rule' the condition that the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles should be closed to the warships of all nations, and undertook that if Russia and England should come to an understanding on these matters, the Treaty of Unkiar-Skelessi should not be renewed.<sup>2</sup>

It was still, however, far from plain sailing for Palmerston. The French regarded the Russian overture as merely a means of separating France and England ; and a considerable party in the British Cabinet cared much more for preserving the Anglo-French *entente* than for improving the situation in the East. It became necessary, therefore, to modify the Russian proposals so that if a Russian force entered the Bosphorus, a British force should enter the Dardanelles ; whilst Mehemet Ali was

<sup>1</sup> *England and the Orleans Monarchy*, by J. Hall, p. 244.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 253.

accorded somewhat better terms.<sup>1</sup> 'Brunnow,' Palmerston wrote on January 5, 1840, 'is empowered to negotiate with the object of bringing about a permanent and definite solution of the Turkish and Egyptian question, in order to insure the independence and integrity of the Ottoman Empire. Baron Neumann has arrived from Vienna, and has expressed to me that Austria is entirely with us and Russia in this important affair. I think I can say for certain that Prussia will look at matters in the same light. It only remains for us, therefore, to secure a European concord on a question which is incontestably the most serious that we have had to deal with these last years. We sincerely hope that the co-operation of France will not be refused.'<sup>2</sup>

The defeat of the Soult Cabinet in France in February, 1839, and the return to the Foreign Office of Thiers, did not make for peace. Guizot, who was ambassador in London, diagnosed more accurately the situation. He expressed the opinion that 'the British Government regarded the present moment as a favourable opportunity for settling affairs in the East, and that a sudden resolve might be taken to act without us.'<sup>3</sup> 'It is possible,' he wrote a few days later, 'we may be on the eve of important decisions. . . . The British Government has two interests at stake in the Eastern question—the wish to keep Russia from Constantinople and the fear of French influence in Egypt. . . . The present moment is looked upon as favourable for the attainment of these objects. By a singular combination of circumstances, Russia is both prepared to abandon

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 256.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted *ibid.* p. 258.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted *ibid.* p. 262.



her pretensions to exercise an exclusive Protectorship over the Ottoman Empire, and to assist England to weaken the Pasha of Egypt. . . . Great Britain, consequently, is far from regarding the present situation as embarrassing, but, on the contrary, deems it a most fortunate development, which she must make use of to the best advantage. . . . She is aware, however, that in prosecuting this policy she may impair her good understanding with France. To retain our friendship, she will make some concessions, but I am disposed to think that she has no intention of allowing the present opportunity of attaining her ends in the East to escape.' <sup>1</sup>

The main obstacle to Palmerston's policy lay in the attitude of his colleagues. 'Not to mention Lords Holland and Clarendon,' Guizot wrote to Thiers on June 1, 'Melbourne and Lansdowne will be very loath to see the French alliance dissolved.' He added, however, 'Yet Palmerston, I believe, is as firm as ever, and I am far from certain whether those of his colleagues who disagree with him would stand up to him very firmly when it comes to the point.' <sup>2</sup> The tug-of-war came over the question whether England should sign a separate treaty on behalf of Turkey along with Russia, Austria and Prussia, to which France would refuse its assent. Unable to convince some of his colleagues, Palmerston placed his resignation in the hands of the Prime Minister. In a long letter to Lord Melbourne he explained and justified his policy. To refuse to co-operate with the other Signatory Powers would

<sup>1</sup> Quoted *England and the Orleans Monarchy*, by J. Hall, p. 266.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

drive Russia once more to resume 'her separate and isolated position' respecting Turkey. The ultimate result of such a decision would be the practical division of the Ottoman Empire into two separate and independent states, whereof one would be a dependency of France and the other a satellite of Russia.' <sup>1</sup>

Very reluctantly his dissentient colleagues yielded, and on July 15, 'a convention for the pacification of the Levant was signed by the Plenipotentiaries of Great Britain, Russia, Austria and Prussia on the one hand, and that of the Sublime Porte on the other.' <sup>2</sup> By this convention the four Powers undertook to assist the Porte in reducing Mehemet Ali to submission, the task of intercepting all communication by sea between Egypt and Syria being assigned to England and Austria. In the circumstances it was natural enough that the terms of the treaty were not at once communicated to the French ambassador. It was the expectation of Louis Philippe and his Cabinet that Mehemet Ali would prove a hard nut for the Powers to crack. Meanwhile, the rôle of France was to put forward a dignified protest and to arm to the teeth.

How near England and France were to going to war is even now uncertain. Both Louis Philippe and Thiers used very strong language; but neither at heart perhaps intended to proceed to extremities. Meanwhile, a compromise suggested by France, under which the government of Syria was to be transferred to Mehemet's son, Ibrahim, for a time received the

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Lord Palmerston*, by Sir H. Bulwer, vol. ii. pp. 356-63.

<sup>2</sup> J. Hall, *op. cit.* p. 276.

support of Lord John Russell. In deference, however, to an appeal from the Queen, he abandoned his intention to resign.<sup>1</sup>

The swift successes of the British fleet in the East proved the justice of Palmerston's confidence in the weakness of Mehemet Ali; whilst the line taken by France showed him to have been equally prescient in his views regarding the French threats. The deposition by the Porte of Mehemet Ali from the pashalik of Egypt, which had been advised and approved by the British ambassador at Constantinople, gave room for a compromise; Mehemet Ali remaining the ruler of Egypt, whilst he surrendered any claim to his conquests. The resignation of Thiers in October, 1840,<sup>2</sup> and the substitution of a Ministry in which Guizot became Foreign Minister, was an overt sign that France now intended to maintain a peaceful policy. The return of France to the Concert of Europe was made manifest when French Plenipotentiaries, together with those of Great Britain, Austria, Russia and Prussia, signed on July 13, 1841, the Convention of the Straits, by which these countries pledged themselves to uphold the undertaking of the Sultan to close the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus to the warships of all foreign nations.

Sir John Hall, the leading authority of the period in question, after vindicating the wisdom of Palmer-

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Lord John Russell*, by Spencer Walpole, vol. i. pp. 351-56.

<sup>2</sup> According to Palmerston, 'the King gave Thiers permission to bully and swagger and threaten, and to gain all he could by so doing, provided he did not go to the extent of war' (*Melbourne Papers*, pp. 488-9); Hall, *op. cit.* p. 323.

ston's Egyptian policy, writes : ' But whatever verdict may be passed upon it, his rare skill and determination in carrying it out must command universal admiration. Although ruin, disgrace and perhaps impeachment must have been the penalty of failure, he never wavered in his resolution to execute his treaty in all its details. His indomitable spirit stimulated the courage of his allies abroad and triumphed over the opposition of his fellow ministers at home. When he quitted the Foreign Office, British prestige stood at a height which it had not reached since the Battle of Waterloo. His most persistent detractors had been forced to admit the correctness of his military judgment and his prescience in treating as of no account the warlike threats of Louis Philippe and of M. Thiers.

" "Palmerston," wrote Reeve regretfully, "has bowled out every one." Charles Greville was moved to enthusiasm. "The elder Pitt," he records, "could not have manifested more decision and resource ; success is much more attributable to Palmerston than to our naval and military commanders, and probably only to him." ' <sup>1</sup>

Whatever may have been Palmerston's vigour and courage, it is still worth noting Charles Greville's criticism of him under the date November 13, 1840 : ' Where he is and always has been wrong is in his neglect of forms ; the more *fortiter* he is in *re*, the more *suaviter* he ought to be in *modo*. But while defending his policy or attacking that of France, he has never said what he might have done to conciliate, to soften, and to

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 329-30.

destroy those impressions of intended affronts and secret designs which have produced such violent effects on the French public. On the contrary, he has constantly, in his State Papers and still more in his newspapers, said what is calculated to irritate and provoke them to the highest degree ; but Dedel (the Dutch Minister in England) says this has always been his fault, in all times and in all his diplomatic dealings, and this is the reason he is so detested by all the Corps diplomatique, and has made such enemies all over Europe.' <sup>1</sup> Greville was no friend of Palmerston. Still he again and again acknowledges his great ability ; and there is much evidence in the history of British diplomacy to justify his accusation.

With regard to Belgium, it was, as we have seen, possible to preserve the Concert of Europe. In the spring of 1839 Holland joined the Powers in making a definite treaty, embodying the territorial provisions of the treaty of 1831. Great Britain, Austria, France, Prussia and Russia guaranteed the neutrality of Belgium in any future war. The guarantee was an individual guarantee, and not merely a collective one. It should be noted that under the treaty the extreme mouth of the Scheldt was left under the control of the Dutch in accordance with past history ; and Antwerp remained solely a port of commerce. The King of the Belgians was very far from satisfied with the terms enforced. He wrote to his niece, Queen Victoria (April 19, 1839) : ' I think old Pirsin, who said in the Chamber that, if the Treaty was carried into execution, I was likely to be the first and last King of the Country,

<sup>1</sup> *Greville Memoirs*, 2nd part, vol. i. p. 353.

was not wrong. Whenever this will happen it will be very *awkward* for England, and *deservedly so*.<sup>1</sup> The grievance was that Great Britain, after having spent years in endeavouring to make an unwilling Holland accept the terms, should have refused to aid and abet Belgium in repudiating them, when at last the consent of Holland had been obtained.

For the first time since the passing of the Reform Bill, the Conservative party found themselves in 1841 again in power. So far as foreign policy was concerned, the change was one from tumult to peace. Melbourne told Charles Greville that, if Palmerston had continued another year in office, he would have precipitated a conflict with France. Sir Robert Peel and his Foreign Secretary, Lord Aberdeen, were both eminently men of peace; the only danger being in the case of the latter, that the bow may have been bent too far the other way; so that the Czar Nicholas, on his visit to England, in 1844, may have been misled as to how far he could go without producing war. But for the years 1841-1846 'never was there a Minister for Foreign Affairs who had such an easy time of it.'<sup>2</sup> Throughout Aberdeen's foreign administration, Clarendon constantly acted in concert with him, and thus made his position in the House of Lords a bed of roses. He was moreover *persona grata* with the Queen and Prince Albert.

Lord Aberdeen's weakness was that, himself peace-loving, he had a touching confidence in the good faith of others.

<sup>1</sup> *Letters of Queen Victoria*, vol. i. p. 153.

<sup>2</sup> *Greville Memoirs*, 2nd part, vol. ii. p. 403.

On January 1, 1845, Lord Aberdeen wrote to protest against the defensive works recommended by the Duke of Wellington, as Commander-in-Chief. It was impossible for him 'to approve of a system which would virtually stultify our whole policy for the last three years.' The Duke replied: 'It may be a very foolish opinion, but I think it better to rely upon our own means for our defence than upon the good faith and forbearance of France.'<sup>1</sup>

Sir Robert Peel wrote to Lord Aberdeen on May 31: 'I must say that the accounts we receive from various quarters of the folly of Louis Philippe, and his apparent desire on all occasions, when the interests and feelings of other Powers are concerned, to disclaim a friendly understanding with England, are very embarrassing.

'What a pretty state the *entente cordiale* is in as regards Greece if Louis Philippe, in conversation with the Austrian Ambassador at Paris, professes agreement with Austria and dissent from England "from the unfortunate tendency of the British Government at all times to support revolutions and thus disturb the peace of Europe."

'Considering by whom this is said, and of whom it is said, the force of impudence cannot go much further!'<sup>2</sup>

In September, Aberdeen tendered his resignation on the ground that a policy of friendship and confidence with regard to France had been converted into a policy of hostility and distrust; but he was induced to withdraw his resignation.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Sir R. Peel, from his Private Papers*, ed. by C. S. Parker, vol. iii. pp. 396-7.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 399.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 401.

In an interesting letter, Wellington explained his position. 'There is no individual,' he wrote (September 22), 'connected with your Government more sensible than I am of the absolute importance of connecting France with the Councils of Europe, and, above all, of a good understanding between this country and France. These were the principles on which the transactions of the Peace of 1815 were settled and carried into execution, connected as these were with those of precaution against the dangers of the hostility of France.'

'Every day's experience proves that nothing can be settled in Europe or the Levant without war, unless by good understanding with France; nor can any question be settled in other parts of the world, excepting by the good understanding between France and this country. . . . I believe the King and his Minister are wise men, and sincerely desire—the former for the sake of his dynasty, and both for the sake of France—to maintain peace with this Country.'

'But look at the state of naval preparation in France. Look at the proportion of the expenditure in that department, compared with that of all others. For what is that preparation made? Is it with a view to co-operate with England in joint objects? Is it to prepare for a defensive warfare as against England? The last thing! It is with a view to carry on against England offensive maritime warfare, and to make the British Empire the seat of the war.'

'Who has made these preparations? Louis Philippe, and, in the latter years at least, Guizot.'



As Frenchmen, at the head of the new Government, they are right. But don't let us deceive ourselves. These preparations are not symptoms of friendliness, or a cordial good understanding with, or even of a desire of peace with England. They are symptoms of deadly hostility.'<sup>1</sup> Again, on October 6, he wrote: 'I contend, therefore, that we must begin by putting ourselves in a state of security. Then show that we are strong; and we shall again be the soul of the Alliance of Europe.'<sup>2</sup> Sir Robert himself seems to have been taken in by Guizot. 'By means of reciprocal confidence, or reciprocal trust in concurrence of views and purity of intentions,' he wrote to that Minister, when the question of the Spanish marriages was already in the air (December 18, 1845), 'we have succeeded in elevating the tone and spirit of the two nations, have taught them to regard something higher than paltry jealousies and hostile rivalries, and to estimate the full value of that social and moral influence which cordial relations give to each for every good and beneficent purpose.'<sup>3</sup>

It is regrettable that events were soon to show how little worthy was the Puritan-Jesuit French statesman of this trust and confidence.

There was in truth need that the British Foreign Secretary of State should be a man of moderation. Once more the government of Louis Philippe threw an ugly light on the ways of a parvenu monarchy. It is impossible to enter here into the involved

<sup>1</sup> *Sir R. Peel, from his Private Papers*, ed. by C. S. Parker, vol. viii. pp. 404-5.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 409.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 411.

details of the subject of 'the Spanish Marriages.' It must suffice to say that whilst the matter 'had been and was,' in Queen Victoria's words, 'treated here as one purely and solely Spanish,'<sup>1</sup> Louis Philippe and his Minister Guizot made it the subject of underhand and discreditable intrigue, with the final result that Palmerston, on returning to office in 1846, informed the French Minister that 'it was the first time a King of France had broken his word.'<sup>2</sup> 'The King (Louis Philippe) should know,' wrote Queen Victoria, 'that we are extremely indignant; and that this conduct is not the way to keep up the *Entente* which he wishes.'<sup>3</sup>

Other causes of friction occurred with France, so that when a distinct violation of the Treaty of Vienna by Russia, Austria and Prussia occurred, the Western Powers were unable to speak with a single voice. Under that treaty the three Powers engaged 'to respect and to cause to be always respected the neutrality of the free town of Cracow and its territory.' A Convention between them, dated Novem-

<sup>1</sup> *Letters*, vol. i. p. 486.

<sup>2</sup> *Greville Memoirs*, 2nd part, vol. ii. p. 423.

<sup>3</sup> *Letters*, vol. ii. p. 100. The Spanish marriages question arose from the weakness of Lord Aberdeen, who, instead of protesting against the intention of the French government to limit the choice of a husband to a member of the House of Bourbon, contented himself with the condition that the one chosen must not be heir to the throne of France. Louis Philippe had solemnly promised that no son of his should marry even the Infanta until the Queen was married and had issue. In spite of this, on the plea that England was promoting the Queen's marriage with a Coburg Prince, the engagement was formally announced of the Queen to her cousin, the Duke of Cadiz, and of her sister, the Infanta, to Louis Philippe's son, the Duc de Montpensier. (H. Lytton Bulwer, *op. cit.* vol. iii. pp. 208-314. See also Hall, *op. cit.* ch. xi.)

ber 6, 1846, revoked this article and re-united Cracow and its territory to Austria. There was here no question of a guarantee ; but the subject having been settled by a treaty, to which France and England were parties, it was doubtless a breach of that treaty that it should be settled behind their backs, without their assent being obtained to the alteration. In the special circumstances of the case, Great Britain was helpless, especially as the relations with France prevented the issue of a joint note. Still Palmerston felt bound to utter a protest. ' Her Majesty's Government, deeply impressed with the conviction that it is above all things important that the engagement of treaties should at all times be faithfully observed. most earnestly hope that means may be devised for guarding the territories of the three Powers against the dangers adverted to in their identic communications without any breach of the treaty of 1815.' <sup>1</sup> Queen Victoria recognised the necessity ' of speaking out in time before Russia or France may have decided on acts of further infraction of the treaty of Vienna.' <sup>2</sup>

At this time no little friction arose from the habit of Lord Palmerston of sending off dispatches to British foreign Ministers without previously submitting them to the Queen.<sup>3</sup> ' This was not merely a matter of form, as Queen Victoria was not a little disturbed at some of Palmerston's proceedings. She had reason to fear that diplomatic intrigues and counter-intrigues at Madrid had robbed England of its advantageous position without any compen-

<sup>1</sup> *Select Treaties and Documents*, ed. by R. B. Mowat, pp. 60-65. *Letters*, vol. ii. p. 114.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 122.

sating benefits. She entreated Lord J. Russell not to underrate the importance of keeping our foreign policy beyond reproach. Public opinion was recognised as a ruling power in our domestic affairs ; it was not of less importance in the society of Europe with reference to the conduct of the individual States. To possess the confidence of Europe was of the utmost importance to this country.' <sup>1</sup> When the Revolution of 1848 swept Louis Philippe from the throne of France, it was the Queen who suggested that 'amongst the laudable intentions of the new French Government, that of keeping inviolate the European treaties should be brought in in some way.' <sup>2</sup> 'If a Government,' she wrote to her uncle, 'which has the approbation of the Country be formed, we shall feel it necessary to recognise it in order to pin them down to maintain peace and the existing Treaties, which is of great importance. It will not be pleasant for us to do this, but the public good and the peace of Europe go before one's feelings.' <sup>3</sup>

Queen Victoria, who acted under the influence of the Prince Consort, was prepared to forget her private feelings when the interests of her country were at stake. Still she was a crowned head, brought up in a German milieu, and with natural sympathies with those of her kind. Her Ministers, on the other hand, Lord John Russell and Palmerston, felt strongly the force of the new movement in favour of oppressed nationalities, and recognised that there might be other European obligations besides the maintenance of the *status quo*. In this

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 132-3.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 155.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 155-6.

state of things, apart from the brusque and somewhat casual methods of Palmerston, there was inevitable difference of opinion between the Queen and her advisers. To Lord John the moral of the events of 1848 was that it was impossible that the exclusion of free speaking and writing which formed the essence of Prince Metternich's system could continue. It might have been reformed quietly ; ' it has fallen with a crash which spreads ruin and death around.'<sup>1</sup> The Queen and Prince Albert were by no means reactionaries ; but, especially in the matter of Italy, they did not share their ministers' enthusiasm. They objected to an offer of mediation between Austria and the King of Sardinia, which practically recommended that whatever the Italians asked for ought to be given them.<sup>2</sup> The Queen could not conceal from Palmerston that she ' is ashamed of the policy which we are pursuing in this Italian controversy in abetting wrong, and this for the object of gaining influence in Italy.'<sup>3</sup>

Before the outbreak in France, Palmerston had written to the British Ambassador at Vienna : ' If he (Metternich) takes upon himself the task of regulating by force of arms the internal affairs of the Italian States, there will infallibly be war, and it will be a war of principles which, beginning in Italy, will spread over all Europe. . . . In that war England and Austria will certainly not be on the same side.'<sup>4</sup> In fact, in the war which ensued, it was Charles Albert of Sardinia who was the

<sup>1</sup> *Letters*, vol. ii. p. 170.<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 178.<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 182.<sup>4</sup> *The Life of Lord Palmerston*, 1846-65, by E. Ashley, vol. i. p. 64.

aggressor, by offering aid to insurgent Lombardy, so that England's attitude was that of passive spectator. Lord Palmerston frankly explained to the King of the Belgians that he wished to see the whole of Northern Italy united into one kingdom, so as to interpose between France and Austria a neutral State, strong enough to make itself respected, and independent in its sympathies of both those countries. He believed such an arrangement to be inevitable, and the sooner Austria recognised the necessity, the better conditions she would be able to secure.<sup>1</sup> Palmerston was anxious to act in unison with the new French Republic so as to prevent it taking unauthorised action on its own behalf; but the Queen held strongly to the view that 'the establishment of an *entente cordiale* with the French Republic for the purpose of driving the Austrians out of their *dominions* in Italy would be a disgrace to this country.'<sup>2</sup> Again, 'How will England appear before the world at the moment when she is struggling to maintain her supremacy in Ireland, and boasts to stand by treaties with regard to her European relations, having declined all this time to interfere in Italy, or to address one word of caution to the Sardinian Government on account of its attack on Austria, and having refused to mediate when called upon to do so by Austria, because the terms were not good enough for Sardinia, if she should now ally herself with the arch-enemy of Austria, to interfere *against her* at the moment when she has recovered in some degree her position in the Venetian territory?'<sup>3</sup> As showing the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 98.<sup>2</sup> *Letters*, vol. ii. p. 186.<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 187.

cleavage of opinion, we may note that Queen Victoria held that 'it will be a calamity for ages to come if this principle is to become part of international law, viz. "that a people can at any time transfer their allegiance from the sovereign of one state to that of another by universal suffrage (under momentary excitement)," and this is what Lord Normanby (the British Minister at Paris)—no doubt according to Lord Palmerston's wishes—has taken as the basis of mediation.'<sup>1</sup> So far was the Queen from realising the meaning of nationality that she maintained that there was a better case for Danish Sleswig being absorbed in the German Confederation than there was for Lombardy coming under the rule of the King of Sardinia. 'The partiality of Lord Palmerston,' the Queen wrote to Lord John in October, 'really *surpasses all conception* and makes the Queen *very uneasy* on account of the character and honour of England, and on account of the danger to which the peace of England will be exposed.'<sup>2</sup> Again, writing to her uncle, she said: 'What a very bad figure we cut in this mediation! Really it is quite immoral, with Ireland quivering in our grasp, and ready to throw off her allegiance at any moment, for us to force Austria to give up her lawful possessions. What should we say if Canada, Malta, etc., begin to trouble us? It hurts me terribly. This ought to be the principle in *all actions*, private as well as public: "Wass du nicht willst, dass dir geschieht, das thu' auch einem andern nicht."'<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Letters*, vol. ii. p. 192.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 197.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 199-200.

But moral indignation was not all on one side ; and, though the forces of reaction triumphed for the time, Charles Albert, being compelled to surrender Milan to the ruthless Austrian General Radetzky, and the Piedmontese being afterwards defeated at Novara, and though active assistance could not be obtained from France any more than from England, nevertheless the ball had begun rolling, which was not to stand still till a United Italy had taken her place amongst the European Powers.

The misfortune was, throughout these difficult years, that an excellent cause was championed by Palmerston in a most questionable way. There was undoubted truth in Prince Albert's remark that he was 'bringing the whole of the hatred which is borne to him . . . by all the Governments of Europe upon England, and that the country runs serious danger of having to pay for the consequences.'<sup>1</sup> Lord John Russell admitted to Prince Albert that, while Palmerston's policy had been right and received his approval, the manner of its execution had led to irritation and hostility. Not only Russia and Austria, but also France and the Liberal States, had become decidedly hostile to England.<sup>2</sup> Although, then, it is impossible not to admire the courage and determination with which Palmerston offered the support of England to the Porte when it refused to give up to Austria the political refugees, the victims of the Russian overthrow of the Hungarians in 1848, the manner in which he treated an assault in South London upon the Austrian General Haynau, notorious for his cruelty, was hardly diplomatic ;

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 243.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 202.



whilst a year later he was only restrained by the veto of the Prime Minister and the Queen from giving Kossuth, the Hungarian revolutionary, a public reception at the Foreign Office. The cup of his iniquities was filled, so far as the Court was concerned, by his going out of his way to welcome the *coup d'état* of Napoleon III., without consulting his colleagues or the Queen. On December 19th he received from Lord John Russell an unconditional dismissal.

We may well admit that Palmerston was often misguided and headstrong in his actions, and yet recognise that an honest hatred of tyranny and of wrong inspired his policy. Clear headed and enlightened as was Prince Albert, we must remember that he was and remained a German; and that he could not thus always look on European questions with a British eye. There was an element of prejudice in the way in which the Queen and the Prince Consort at once agreed with the German argument over the Sleswig-Holstein case, when it made its reappearance, in 1848, upon the European stage. Most Englishman will now agree with Palmerston's trenchant criticism, written in November, 1850: 'German affairs are indeed come to a state of chaos. The only thing that seems pretty clear is that all parties are more or less in the wrong. But Prussia seems to bear away the palm in this respect. Her course has been, indeed, dishonest, inconsistent, irresolute and weak. In regard to the Sleswig-Holstein question she has throughout acted with the greatest duplicity and bad faith. In regard to German affairs her only object, from beginning to

end, seems to have been her own aggrandisement, which, at moments when much was within her grasp, she had not courage or steadiness successfully to pursue. Her partisans try to make out that the contest between her and Austria is a struggle between Constitutional and Arbitrary Government, but it is no such thing ; it is only a conflict between the two leading Powers in Germany as to which shall be politically preponderant. We should have had no objection to see Prussia take the first place ; on the contrary, a German Union, embracing all the smaller States, with Prussia at its head and in alliance with Austria as a separate Power, would have been a very good European arrangement ; but when the Empire was offered to Prussia the King shrank from the hazardous position. . . . The Empire having been thus negatived, Prussia ought to have taken at once the only other possible course, and to have come to an agreement with Austria for reconstructing the German Confederation on the principles of 1815, with such modifications as the establishment of Parliaments in Prussia and Austria and all the other States might render necessary. Instead of this Prussia went on pottering about the Erfurt Union, which never could end anywhere but in smoke, and then she chose deliberately to expose herself to the humiliation of being obliged by military threats to retreat step by step from all the positions she had taken up in regard to almost all pending affairs. All this is lamentable, and is a fresh proof that honesty is the best policy.’<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ashley, *op. cit.* vol. i. pp. 242-3.

In his great speech<sup>1</sup> on the Pacifico Question, wherein the forces of Great Britain were employed to enforce the somewhat doubtful claims of a very shady Levantine Jew,<sup>2</sup> Palmerston was able to claim that 'while we have seen . . . the political earthquake rocking Europe from side to side, while we have seen thrones shaken, shattered, levelled, institutions overthrown and destroyed, while in almost every country of Europe the conflict of civil war has deluged the land with blood from the Atlantic to the Black Sea, from the Baltic to the Mediterranean, this country has presented a spectacle honourable to the people of England and worthy of the admiration of mankind. . . .

'I therefore challenge the verdict which this House, as representing a political, a commercial, a constitutional country, is to give on the question now brought before it—whether the principles on which the foreign policy of her Majesty's Government has been conducted and the sense of duty which has led us to think ourselves bound to afford protection to our fellow-subjects abroad are proper and fitting guides for those who are charged with the Government of England; and whether as the Roman in days of old held himself free from indignity when he could say *civis Romanus sum*, so also a British subject, in whatever land he may be, shall feel confident that the watchful eye and the strong arm of England will protect him against injustice and wrong.'

<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> June 25, 1850.

<sup>2</sup> Compare Palmerston's indifference when the British Minister, Mr. D. Morier, was insulted at Berne in 1846. (*Memoirs of Sir R. Morier*, vol. i. p. 54.)

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 222-3.

In the anxiety occasioned by Lord Palmerston's high-handed proceedings, Queen Victoria took the unusual course of demanding from his successor, Lord Granville, a general confession of faith with regard to foreign policy. This step was not a wise one. The grievance, the just grievance, was that Palmerston sent off dispatches which had not been duly submitted to the Sovereign. But this was a definite cause for complaint, quite apart from faults of manner, about which a man could hardly be an impartial judge in his own case, and from liberal leanings which a liberal Minister, in the middle of the nineteenth century, was hardly likely to disavow. Lord Granville's biographer, Lord Fitz-Maurice, supplies us with an epitome of the Memorandum in reply. It appears to have been of a most adroit and non-committal character. While encouraging progress amongst all other nations, Great Britain should practise 'justice, moderation and self-respect,' in her dealings with them and avoid any undue attempt to enforce her own ideas by hostile threats. 'The Cabinet adhered to the principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of other Countries. . . . But they did not attach to the expression "non-intervention" the meaning that . . . diplomacy is become obsolete; and that it is unnecessary for this country to know or to take part in what passes in other Countries with regard to occurrences likely to have international consequences. No general rule, however, could be uniformly applied.'<sup>1</sup>

But, as we have seen, it was not principles but

<sup>1</sup> Fitz Maurice, *op. cit.* pp. 49-51.

the manner of enforcing them which had been at fault. 'I see every day,' Lord Granville wrote to Lord Clarendon, 'the proofs in the Foreign Office of the extraordinary ability and of the little follies of my predecessor.'<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile the rise to power of another Napoleon was bringing a new possible danger to European peace. 'France was peaceful,' wrote Baron Stockmar to Lord Granville, 'from 1815 to 1848 because she was during that time *tant bien que mal* constitutionally governed. . . . It is feared that the more peaceable disposition will disappear with the extinction of constitutional government. . . . Napoleon's system in foreign affairs was *La France et la violence*. This system the nephew believes himself predestined to revive. But even if this was not his creed, the force of circumstances which domineers him would constrain him to do it. . . . With regard to the attempts on the present *status quo* of Europe, the only check really operative on the President and the French will be the conviction that *L'Europe unie s'opposera à tout envahissement*.'<sup>2</sup> Bismarck, then Prussian Minister to the German Diet, hinted to the British Chargé d'affaires of dark designs on the part of France and Austria against Belgium and Sardinia. The Prime Minister wrote to Lord Granville: 'The President's assurances are hardly to be trusted, but I think he has no interest in going to war. The Belgians must be defended by us and by Prussia.'<sup>3</sup> A farther subject of difficulty was the remonstrances addressed by France,

<sup>1</sup> Fitz Maurice, *op. cit.* p. 52.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 59.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 65.

Austria, Germany, Prussia, Russia and Naples, directed against the welcome given in Great Britain to political refugees. This was a question on which no British Minister could have a moment's doubt. The Austrian ambassador might bluster and threaten, but Palmerston, Granville and his Tory successor, Lord Malmesbury, were, here at least, in complete accord.<sup>1</sup>

For some twenty years British foreign policy was closely associated with the enigmatic personality of Napoleon III. The Prince Consort, in conversation with Count Vitzthum (1860), the Saxon Envoy, thus powerfully described his character: 'He is, as he himself may sometimes think, the creature of a fatal destiny. His actions are the logical consequences of given premises. He *wills* far less often than he *must*. He is more to be pitied than blamed. His whole power is based upon falsehood. His system rests upon unsolved and insoluble contradictions, which assert themselves in mutual antagonism, and which must bring his system, if not himself, to a tragic end. To reconcile these contradictions is impossible. Napoleon would like to be Emperor by the grace of God, and at the same time *par la volonté nationale*. He can be either one or the other, but never both together. In France, his power, if not derived from, at least rests upon, the Catholic Priesthood. In Italy he is compelled, in order to escape the daggers of Orsini's Confederates and to redeem the promises made to the Carbonari, to threaten and attack

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 70-7, see also Lord Malmesbury's *Memoire of an Ex-Minister*, vol. i. p. 334.

the Romish Church. In like manner "l'Empire c'est la paix" stands in direct contradiction to the need of giving employment to his army. Eventually he will not be able to live without the halo of a campaign on the Rhine. . . . The most extraordinary thing is that the Emperor is really sincere in both directions. He honestly believes in what he says to-day, and just as honestly in what he will say to the contrary to-morrow. That things have gone tolerably hitherto is owing to his undeniable cleverness and to a certain exercise of prudence. But with all his gifts he is unable to appreciate that irreconcilable conflict of ideas, of which he is sure in time to be the victim. He is no philosopher.' <sup>1</sup>

Bismarck's opinion of him in 1855 was that his heart was better than his head.<sup>2</sup>

There is no reason to question the opinion that Napoleon III. had carried away from the study of his great uncle's career the conviction that Great Britain was the rock upon which the fortunes of Napoleon had foundered; and that, therefore, the keynote of French policy should be an understanding with England. Moreover, he was grateful for the friendly reception he had received in that country; and, in spite of the successive rumours of war that occurred during the Second Empire, there is no evidence that the Emperor himself ever fanned the flame of resentment against Great Britain. Still, from the point of view of sober British statesmen, his position could not be other than that of a firebrand. His aim was to overturn the settle-

<sup>1</sup> *St. Petersburg and London*, 1852-64, vol. ii. p. 19.

<sup>2</sup> Bismarck, *op. cit.* vol. i. pp. 168-9.

ment of 1815, a settlement always to be associated with the humiliation of France, and substitute for it a new Europe, the foundations of which should be, in great part, laid by French wisdom and magnanimity. That the settlement of 1815 was from many points of view open to criticism must be admitted. 'The map of Europe,' wrote Count Vitzhum in retrospect, many years after, 'as it issued from the Congress of Vienna, was, as everybody knows, a fanciful and arbitrary piece of patchwork, which bore the stamp of a frivolous and unprincipled age. The longings of the German nation for power and unity, which had been awakened by the efforts made in the war of Liberation, remained unsatisfied. Prussia—no "satiated" State, to use Metternich's own expression—too strong to be a vassal, but too weak to be a great Power, was likewise baulked of her expectations, and had some trouble to make the spoiled inhabitants of the Rhine Provinces forget how well they had fared under the crosier. The frontiers of the other German States had been traced with ordinary caprice. . . .

'The balance of Power in Europe, which was supposed to have been restored in 1815, was a fiction, and the alliance of the Five Powers, which Metternich fancied he had sealed at Aix-la-Chapelle for ever, soon proved an idle phantom. And to this fiction and this phantom Austria had now to sacrifice all her strength for three and thirty years because Prince Metternich regarded the fiction as the embodiment of absolute right, and the phantom as the only means of making that right prevail. . . . States are living organisms, not dead bodies, to



be experimented upon. Not in war only, but also in peace, Napoleon's *gros bataillons* decide the day. The first requisite of a sound policy is, therefore, real power. A politician who deceives himself about the real power of the State he represents may be ever so dexterous a juggler, ever so clever a conjuror; he will always come off second best in his dealings with more powerful States, however superior he may be to their leaders.

'Prince Metternich had never been fully conscious of the relative weakness of Austria, or, with his intellectual superiority over most if not all of the Princes and Ministers of his time, he would certainly have made at least an effort to secure for Austria those foundations of real power in which she was wanting. . . .

'It is obvious that in 1815 there was one means and one means only of giving to the Hapsburg-Lotharingian Monarchy that position of power which could make Metternich's conservative principle an absolute truth. This was the re-acceptance of the Imperial Crown of Germany, and as an object of policy the ousting of Prussia from her position as a great Power, and the mediatising of all the German Provinces. None but the head of the German nation could ever succeed in not only curbing and checking the complex Austrian State, with all its various nationalities; but also in dictating peace to Europe. . . . In politics the greatest evil is not guilt, as Schiller says, but weakness. . . . Standing still means going back, with individuals and with States. A State which thinks only of keeping what it has got, must necessarily go back directly

it has to do with neighbours who look chiefly not to keeping but to getting ; and are always bent on enlarging their territory and strengthening their sphere of power.'

'Events,' Count Vitzhum concludes, 'are stronger than men. The cannon of Solferino, Sadowa and Sédan tore to pieces the web spun by the Metternich school. And as the Nuremberg aldermen were always wiser when they left the town council, so it is easier in 1885 to point out what should have been done in 1815 to secure the permanent peace of the world ; easier, at any rate, than it was to foresee in 1815 what ought to be done if the Hapsburgs were unwilling to yield to the Hohenzollerns the hegemony of Germany ; to the Piedmontese the whole of Italy with its capital Rome ; and to the German nation, united under Prussia's leadership, the honour of vanquishing the nephew of Napoleon I., without the assistance of Austria.

'The life of States revolves, like our planet, around two poles—the positive and the negative. The positive is called "the struggle for existence," the negative "the sweet habit of life." In Germany, Prussia has represented the former and Austria the latter. The Imperial Crown of Germany, which the Emperor Francis, preferring the sweet habit of life to the struggle for existence, disdained in 1815, King William has conquered in three bloody campaigns, and placed it on his head in the palace of Louis XIV., at the unanimous invitation of the German Princes, and amidst the acclamations of the German nation.' <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.* vol. ii. pp. 256-63.

And yet it was the settlement of 1815 that British statesmen found themselves forced back upon, if they were to avoid the unknown dangers of a Europe in the melting pot. This was the respect that gave caution even to liberal statesmen when they were considering the claims, increasing in voice and persistency, of the nationalist idea.

There was one field, however, in which the obligations of treaties corresponded with the demands of reason and of legitimate national feelings. Belgium was in a sense the product of treaties; but its population had known how to weld themselves into a distinct and self-respecting nation. It was in this quarter that many looked for danger with the success of Napoleon III. The prudent Leopold had succeeded by a family alliance in making the France of Louis Philippe his friend and ally; but with the overthrow of Louis Philippe this shelter was torn away. No doubt vague dreams haunted the imagination of Napoleon III. of modifying the treaties of 1815. He threw out hints in 1849 that France would not now be jealous of England gaining more power in Egypt, and suggested that France and England together could remodel everything. He seemed to hint at the idea that France might take the part of Prussia against Austria, so that, if Prussia gained territory in Germany, France would also advance her frontier, leaving Great Britain compensations in the Levant.<sup>1</sup> Doubtless his mind was full of grandiose schemes for the revision of the map of Europe. Still there was force in Lord Malmesbury's reasoning that, granted that he really

<sup>1</sup> Malmesbury, *op. cit.* vol. i. p. 244.

meditated a war of revenge, it did not follow that he should go such a round-about way to make war with England, as through the Belgian guarantee. Lord Malmesbury himself evidently failed to see the full importance to England of the Belgian question, because he added : ‘ We are *unfortunately* bound by treaty and interest to protect Belgium and the Scheldt, and we *must* do it. Russia, Austria and Prussia are equally bound with us, and may, or may not, do it.’<sup>1</sup> A little earlier (March 18, 1852) he had written to the British ambassador at Berlin : ‘ We are not disposed to enter into any offensive or defensive alliances, although we shall readily acknowledge our responsibility as laid down by treaties.

‘ If the President ever contemplated the invasion of Belgium, he has, I think, relinquished the idea for the present, being made aware that from no quarter will he receive encouragement, but probably resistance from every Power of consequence in Europe.’<sup>2</sup> Sir H. Seymour’s private letters from St. Petersburg spoke of the Czar Nicholas’s fixed purpose to stand by the Treaties and to look upon any march into Belgium as a *casus belli*.<sup>3</sup> In this state of things, whether from caution or because (as it seems reasonable to hold) he never really meditated aggression, Napoleon held his hands off Belgium ; and a general European conflagration was thus avoided.

Palmerston had doubtless gone too far in giving his approval, through pique at the shady doings of Louis Philippe, to the excesses of the *coup d’état*.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 356.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 322.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 328.

It was fortunate that his successor as Foreign Minister, Lord Malmesbury, was *persona grata* to Napoleon, through having been his friend in the days of his obscurity. Whatever his faults may have been, Napoleon III. was no snob, and never turned a cold shoulder to those who had befriended him in the past. Though he incurred the contempt of Disraeli, Lord Malmesbury, during his two short periods of office, seems to have fulfilled the duties of Foreign Secretary with competence and dignity. There was assuredly no desire to launch out in a new system of foreign policy ; and Malmesbury was in thorough sympathy with the advice of Palmerston, to keep well with France.<sup>1</sup>

Lord Derby wrote with regard to Austria: 'Our tone should be as cordial as possible, but we must take care what we say, for there is rather too great a desire to exhibit us as following exactly the same line as Austria, and I have no idea of committing the Government to another Holy Alliance.'<sup>2</sup> On the subject of the expulsion of political refugees, the Tory Government took precisely the same line as their Whig predecessors. Even on the subject of Italy, where his sympathies were supposed to be Austrian, we find Malmesbury writing to Sir James Hudson: 'I did not at all exaggerate my admiration of the conduct and results of the King (of Sardinia) and his Ministers since 1849. From all you say, I fear that these fair promises will not bring permanent liberty to Sardinia or any part of Italy, but it is our interest and duty to give at least all the moral force we can to assist this

<sup>1</sup> Malmesbury, *op. cit.* vol. i. p. 317.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 312.

Constitutional Monarchy in its development.'<sup>1</sup> It is curious to set side by side the statement of Palmerston to Malmesbury: 'You have no idea till you know more of your office what a power of prestige England possesses abroad,'<sup>2</sup> and the urgent letters of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, of about the same date, calling attention to the dangerous unpreparedness of Great Britain for war. 'The public would be quite ready,' wrote Prince Albert (November 8, 1852), 'to give the necessary money for armament, but they feel with justice that it is unfair to ask them for large sums and then always to hear, *we are quite unprepared.*'<sup>3</sup> 'With respect to the financial statement,' wrote the Queen (November 13), 'she must most strongly impress Lord Derby with the necessity of referring to our defenceless state, and the necessity of a large outlay, to protect us from foreign attack, which would almost insure us against war.'<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 339.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 317.

<sup>3</sup> *Letters*, vol. ii. p. 398.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p. 399. A few years earlier Lord Clarendon had written (January 3, 1848) to Sir G. C. Lewis: 'I believe I must consent to enter into your category of old women; for, knowing as I do how much the invasion of England has for the last three or four years occupied the French government, I think it downright insanity to remain in the invitingly defenceless condition in which we now are. The papers I have read of the Duke of Wellington . . . leave me no doubt that at any moment after the declaration of war our danger might be imminent and our misfortunes irreparable.' (*Life of Lord Clarendon*, vol. i. p. 237.)

## CHAPTER VII

THE GROWTH OF NATIONALISM. THE PECULIAR CHARACTER OF ANGLO-FRENCH RELATIONS (*Continued*). 1854-1870

THROUGHOUT the eighteenth century there was no special bond of connexion between England and Turkey. France was the traditional ally of the Porte; and England's commercial interests were largely connected with Russia. When, in 1790, Catherine intended to send a great Russian fleet to the Mediterranean against the Turks, she counted as a matter of course on the most 'benevolent neutrality,' amounting to assistance, from the British Government. It is true that her request was refused; but not through any regard for Turkish interests, but because Catherine, having brought about the 'armed neutrality' and having rejected the proffered alliance of Great Britain, could not with reason expect favourable treatment.

It was the designs of Napoleon upon Egypt, as a half-way house to India, and the publication of Colonel Sebastiani's Report that first vividly brought home to the minds of British statesmen the vital importance of the Eastern question to British interests.

Even then the method chosen for protecting those interests was not to enter into close relations with the Porte, but to exert as much influence as possible upon the Russian rulers, so that they should be willing to maintain the *status quo*. Such, roughly, was the policy of Canning, no less than of Castlereagh and Wellington.

That, whatever ulterior aims might be held by some, the Russian Government was in no hurry to precipitate matters, was shown by the fact that Russia joined with the other Powers, except France, in protecting the Porte against the ambitions of his dangerous vassal Mehemet Ali. It is of course true that it was not to the interest of Russia that an able and powerful usurper should become the ruler of Turkey. At the same time, if Russia had at the time held ulterior designs, an opportunity could easily have been found, so as to fish in the troubled waters.

The great difficulty in the way of British statesmen was the lamentable rottenness of the Turkish Government.

Even though the Concert of Europe, established by the four Powers, had met with success, there was one danger spot to which its influence did not extend. The Czar Alexander had from the first explained that, in his opinion, the affairs of the near East did not come within the purview of the Alliance. And yet it was idle to suppose that a great Maritime Power, like Great Britain, should not claim a voice in decisions affecting the Eastern Mediterranean. Assuredly the problem was one of extreme difficulty. Close and friendly as were the



relations between Russia and England, established at the European Settlement of 1814, no reasonable man would be content to give a blank cheque to a great Military Power that might aspire to hegemony in the Mediterranean. And yet how weak was the instrument by which, primarily, Russia had to be resisted. The Duke of Wellington wrote to Lord Aberdeen (October 4, 1829): 'It would be absurd to think of bolstering up the Turkish power in Europe. It is gone, in fact; and the tranquillity of the world, or, what is the same thing, the confidence of the world in the permanence of tranquillity, along with it. I am not quite certain that what will exist will not be worse than the immediate annihilation of the Turkish power.'<sup>1</sup> Nor was it mere reactionary prejudice which led him to add that no substitute could be made 'out of the Greek affair.' Nevertheless, *faute de mieux*, it proved necessary to bolster up this sick man rather than to allow his place to be taken by a predominant Russia. It must, moreover, be acknowledged that, whether owing to its own latent qualities or to the mismanagement of its powerful, but somewhat clumsy, adversary, Turkey had emerged from its wars with Russia with less discredit and failure than might have been anticipated.

The mind of the Russian Czar had been for a long time occupied with the Eastern question; and in his visit to London in 1844 he seems to have thrown out feelers with regard to possible joint action by England and Russia. These suggestions

<sup>1</sup> *Despatches, etc.* vol. vi. p. 192.

were made in a more direct fashion to the British Ambassador at St. Petersburg in the beginning of 1853. In the course of conversation the Czar proceeded to sketch out what would be in his opinion a satisfactory territorial arrangement in the event of the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire. 'The Principalities are,' he said, 'in fact an independent State under my protection: this might so continue. Servia might receive the same form of government. So again, with regard to Bulgaria, there seems no reason why this province should not form an independent State.'

'As to Egypt, I quite understand the importance to England of that territory. I can then only say that if, in the event of a distribution of the Ottoman Succession upon the fall of the Empire, you should take possession of Egypt, I shall have no objections to offer. I would say the same thing of Candia: that island might suit you, and I do not know why it should not become an English possession.'

The Czar added that he did not expect an engagement or a convention. All he wished for was a free interchange of ideas, and, in case of need, the word of a gentleman.<sup>1</sup>

Lord John Russell had already written (February 9, 1853): 'It will hardly be consistent with the friendly feelings towards the Sultan which animate the Emperor of Russia, no less than the Queen of England, to dispose beforehand of the Provinces under his dominion. Besides this consideration, however, it must be observed that an agreement made in such a case tends very surely to hasten the

<sup>1</sup> *Parl. Papers*, 'Eastern Papers,' part v. pp. 11-12, 1854.

contingency for which it is intended to provide. Austria and France could not in fairness be kept in ignorance of the transaction, nor would such concealment be consistent with the end of preventing a European War. . . . An agreement, thus made and thus communicated, would not be very long a secret; and, while it would alarm and alienate the Sultan, the knowledge of its existence would stimulate all his enemies to increased violence and more obstinate conflict. . . . On the part of Great Britain, Her Majesty's Government at once declare that they renounce all intention or wish to hold Constantinople. His Imperial Majesty may be quite secure on that head. They are likewise ready to give an assurance that they will enter into no agreement to provide for the contingency of the fall of Turkey without previous communication with the Emperor of Russia.' <sup>1</sup>

In a confidential memorandum, while complaining of France, the Czar professed himself, upon the whole, satisfied with the attitude of the British Government. 'The two Sovereigns,' he wrote, 'have frankly explained to each other what, in the extreme case of which they have been treating, their respective interests cannot endure. England understands that Russia cannot suffer the establishment at Constantinople of a Christian Power, sufficiently strong to control and disquiet her. She declares that for herself she renounces any intention or desire to possess Constantinople. The Emperor equally disclaims any wish or design of establishing himself there. England promises that she will enter

<sup>1</sup> *Parl. Papers*, 'Eastern Papers,' part v. p. 7.

into no arrangement for determining the measures to be taken in the event of the fall of the Turkish Empire, without a previous understanding with the Emperor. The Emperor, on his side, willingly contracts the same agreement. As he is aware that in such a case he can equally reckon upon Austria, who is bound by her promises to concert with him, he regards with less apprehension the catastrophe which he still desires to prevent and avert as much as it shall depend upon him to do so.' <sup>1</sup>

In a final Memorandum (April 1<sup>st</sup>, 1853) the Czar readily agreed 'that the best means of upholding the duration of the Turkish Government is not to harass it by overbearing demands, supported in a manner humiliating to its independence and its dignity. His Majesty is disposed, as he has ever been, to act upon this system, with the clear understanding, however, that the same rule of conduct shall be observed, without distinction and unanimously, by each of the great Powers, and that none of them shall take advantage of the weakness of the Porte to obtain from it concessions which might turn to the prejudice of the others. This principle being laid down, the Emperor declares that he is ready to labour in concert with England, at the common work of prolonging the existence of the Turkish Empire. Setting aside all alarm on the subject of its dissolution, he readily accepts the evidence offered by the British Cabinet of entire confidence in the uprightness of his sentiments, and the hope that, on this basis, his alliance with England cannot fail to become stronger.' <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 17.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 26.

One would like to believe in the honesty of the Russian Emperor ; but Sir Theodore Martin writes : 'What would the world have thought, could it have known that before feeling the pulse of the English ambassador as to the dismemberment of Turkey, the Emperor had made similar overtures to Austria, and with similar want of success ? Our Government was not aware of this till long afterwards.' <sup>1</sup> Moreover, at the very moment when the Emperor was thus speaking to the British ambassador the Russian representative at Constantinople was trying by threats to extort from the Porte a secret treaty having, according to Lord Stratford de Redcliffe, for its object 'to reinstate Russian influence in Turkey on an exclusive basis and in a commanding and stringent form.' <sup>2</sup> The publication of the conversations between the Czar and the British ambassador was justified by the insertion of an article, officially inspired, in a St. Petersburg newspaper, impugning the good faith of the British Government. The documents, in Lord Clarendon's words, 'proved that our Ministry had been honest to the Sultan, honest to the Allies, honest to the Emperor himself.' <sup>3</sup> They showed to France, Austria and Prussia that, while Russia had been actively intriguing at the various Courts, the English Government had resolutely refused to separate their interests from its own. 'The French,' wrote Lord Howard de Walden from Brussels, 'could hardly believe their eyes when they saw such evidence of our honesty and loyalty towards them, and I hear

<sup>1</sup> *The Life of the Prince Consort*, vol. iii. p. 48, note.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 49.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 48.

that the remark very generally made was "that there was an end of *perfidie Albion*," that no one could again use that hackneyed and ill-merited definition of England.'

On few subjects has there been greater difference of opinion than over the necessity, and therefore the justice, of the Crimean War. Two questions were originally at issue, the guardianship of the Holy Places, and the Russian demand for a protectorate over the Christian subjects of the Sultan. The first was satisfactorily settled; but the second was refused by the Porte, acting at the advice of the British ambassador. The Russians proceeded to occupy the Danubian Principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia (the present Roumania); and the British fleet was ordered to Constantinople. The resources of diplomacy, however, were not yet exhausted. The four Powers—England, France, Austria and Prussia—endeavoured to arrange matters by a note by which the Sultan undertook to remain faithful 'to the letter and to the spirit of the treaties of Kainardji and Adrianople relative to the protection of the Christian religion.' 'This,' comments Lord Esher, 'was most unfortunately worded, but, however, the clause had obtained the sanction of the English Government, and the Czar expressed his willingness to accept it.' Lord Stratford however, saw the danger underlying the ambiguity of the language, and, under his advice, the Porte proposed as an amendment the substitution of the words 'to the stipulations of the treaty of Kainardji,' confirmed by that of Adrianople, relative to the protection by the Sublime Porte of the Christian

religion.’<sup>1</sup> ‘If the views of Russia,’ wrote the Prince Consort, ‘were to prevail, the extension of the privileges and advantages enjoyed by Christian communities in their capacity as *foreigners*, to the Greeks generally with the right granted to Russia to intercede for them to this effect, would simply make foreigners of 10,000,000 of the subjects of the Porte, or depose the Sultan as their Sovereign, putting the Emperor of Russia in his place.’<sup>2</sup>

The Crimean War may or may not have been necessary ; what is certain is, that it was entered upon by a divided Cabinet, united in nothing except the desire to keep together. To prove this it will be sufficient to call in aid Lord Aberdeen’s description of a Cabinet Council held in October, 1853 : ‘When we met, Clarendon made a sort of résumé of what had taken place, but ended in no specific proposal. After a few interlocutory remarks from different quarters, Palmerston proposed his plan. Lord John faintly supported it in general terms, but did not seem much in earnest about it. I said that it appeared to involve the necessity of a declaration of war against Russia, and the calling together Parliament forthwith. Gladstone strongly argued against the proposal. Clarendon then read out an outline of his proposed instructions, which were a great abatement from Palmerston’s plan. We came at last to a sort of compromise ; our great difficulty being how to deal with the question of entering the Black Sea. I consented to this being done, provided it was strictly in defence of some point of attack on Turkish territory. I have no fear that

<sup>1</sup> *Letters of Queen Victoria*, vol. ii. p. 452, note.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

this will take place : and as long as we abstain from entering the Black Sea, peace may be possible between us and Russia. We have thus assumed a strictly defensive position, which for the moment may be sufficient and will enable us to carry on negotiations ; but this cannot last long. Under the character of defensive war, we should inevitably become extensively engaged. Should the Turk be at all worsted, which is probable, of course we must increase our assistance. We shall have a French army and perhaps English money—all for defence.’<sup>1</sup>

Well might Prince Albert comment : ‘ I had a long interview with Sir J. Graham this morning, and told him that Lord Aberdeen’s last letter to the Queen and him made us very uneasy. It was evident that Lord Aberdeen was, against his own better judgment, consenting to a course of policy which he inwardly condemned, that his desire to maintain unanimity at the Cabinet led to concessions which by degrees altered the whole character of the policy, while he held out no hope of being able permanently to secure agreement. I described the Queen’s position as a most painful one. Here were decisions taken by the Cabinet, perhaps even acted upon, involving the most momentous consequences, without her previous concurrence, or even the means for her to judge of the propriety or impropriety of the course to be adopted, with evidence that the Minister, in whose judgment the Queen placed her chief reliance, disapproved of it. The position

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 454. Letter of Lord Aberdeen to Sir J. Graham (Oct. 8, 1853), submitted to the Queen.



was morally and constitutionally a worry. The Queen . . . might now be involved in war, of which the consequences could not be calculated, chiefly by the desire of Lord Aberdeen to keep his Cabinet together. This might then break down, and the Queen would be left without an efficient Government, and a war on her hands.' <sup>1</sup> Again, about a week later, Lord Aberdeen 'acknowledged the disadvantage of the course adopted by the Cabinet, which left the Turks at liberty to do as they pleased. He has to concede this to the Cabinet, which would otherwise have been broken up by Lord John and Lord Palmerston.' 'It is evident,' added Prince Albert, 'that the Turks have every inducement not to let this opportunity slip in going to war with Russia, as they will probably never find so advantageous a one again, as the whole of Christendom has declared them to be in the right, and they would fight with England and France actively on their side.' <sup>2</sup>

Some months before (July 7), Lord Palmerston had written to Lord John: 'I think our position, waiting timidly and submissively at the back door while Russia is violently threatening and arrogantly forcing her way into the house, is unwise with a view to a peaceful settlement, and derogatory to the character and standing and dignity of the two Powers.' <sup>3</sup>

On the other hand, Lord Aberdeen wrote some six months later: 'The abstract justice of the cause, although indisputable, is but a poor consolation

<sup>1</sup> *Letters of Queen Victoria*, vol. ii pp. 454-5.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 456-7.

<sup>3</sup> *Life of Lord J. Russell*, by Spencer Walpole, vol. ii. p. 183.

for the inevitable calamities of all war, or for a decision which I am not without fear may prove to have been impolitic and unwise. My conscience upbraids me the more, because, seeing, as I did from the first, all that was to be apprehended, it is possible that by a little more energy and vigour, not on the Danube, but in Downing Street, it might have been prevented.' <sup>1</sup> Count Vitzhum truthfully wrote that the British Government 'were forced into a position in which events, and not they, were the masters. Like a ship without rigging, which is drifting into a whirlpool against the will of its steersman, they were being dragged reluctantly into war. Very significantly, but not very flatteringly to the British Government, Clarendon in the House of Lords described this position by the words "we are drifting into war." ' <sup>2</sup>

But while the trumpet of the British Cabinet was sounding this uncertain note, other influences were at work, making war inevitable. If Lord Aberdeen really wanted peace he should have accepted the resignation of the masterful British ambassador at Constantinople, tendered on a change of Government. Lord Stratford de Redcliffe at least knew his own mind, and was convinced that the pretensions of Russia must be resisted. 'He encouraged the not unnatural desire of the Sultan "to strike off the fetters of Kainardji and Adrianople," and "settle accounts with Russia once for all"; and those about him had no doubt that he hoped for a war which he believed would humiliate Russia

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 204, note.

<sup>2</sup> *St. Petersburg and London*, vol. i. p. 65.

and give new life to the Ottoman Empire.' <sup>1</sup> Lord Clarendon wrote to Sydney Herbert (September 11, 1853): 'It is quite clear that the Turks don't want a settlement. The titular Sultan is for peace, but the real Sultan (Stratford) thinks that now or never is the time for putting an end to Russia.' <sup>2</sup> And a few days later he wrote: 'It is to Stratford's *amour propre froissé* that the obstacles to peace must be attributed.' <sup>3</sup> Queen Victoria wrote that Lord Stratford's private letters clearly exhibited on his part 'a *desire* for war and to drag us into it' (November 5, 1853). <sup>4</sup> On the other hand, it is easy to lay the blame on others, and Lord Stratford de Redcliffe maintained that on his return to Constantinople he found that the Turkish Government had taken the bit in its mouth and was determined to try conclusions with Russia at an opportune moment, when, in all probability, it would have powerful allies. Meanwhile the Czar, who had taken the measure of Lord Aberdeen, not unnaturally thought that, with him at the helm, England would not proceed to the extremity of war. Again, it seemed to the interest of Napoleon III. that France should take part with Great Britain in a European War. He was not as yet at home in the imperial saddle, and he thought that an alliance with England would give dignity and security to his position. He knew England well, and had received there a

<sup>1</sup> *The Earl of Aberdeen*, by Sir A. Gordon, p. 254.

<sup>2</sup> *Sydney Herbert*, by Lord Stanmore, vol. i. p. 197, note.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Letters*, vol. ii. p. 460. For an able vindication of Lord Stratford de Redcliffe's conduct, see his *Life*, by Stanley Lane-Poole, vol. ii.

friendly welcome ; whereas the Emperor of Russia had wounded his *amour propre*, by delaying to acknowledge his title. He therefore threw the whole weight of his influence in favour of war.

In any case, when once Russia and Turkey were at war, the chances of preventing a European conflagration were slight. The destruction of the Turkish fleet at Sinope (December, 1853), though a perfectly legitimate action in time of war, appeared to the British public a massacre, and aroused a state of feeling in England with which henceforth the Ministry had to count.

Great Britain and France being ranged in one camp and Russia in the other, what chance was there of enlisting the Central Powers in the ranks of the allies ? The Prince Consort attempted the difficult task. 'We supported Russia,' he wrote (July, 1854), 'in her demands at Constantinople, until it became clear that she was bent on annihilating the independence of the Porte. It was not from mere selfishness and with a view to making cat's paws of other Powers, but in order to avert the possibility of war that England pressed for the *Concert Européen*. Austria's and Prussia's faint-heartedness and regard for the Russians made our efforts in this direction fruitless. Thereupon England and France alone took upon themselves the burden of protecting the Porte. . . . All Europe, Belgium and Germany included, have the greatest interest in the integrity and independence of the Porte being secured for the future, but a still greater in Russia being defeated and chastised. For it is to weak States above all others of importance as

a precedent that, if a strong neighbour seeks to oppress them, all Europe should come to their aid and repel the oppressor.' <sup>1</sup>

'When your Majesty tells me,' Queen Victoria, under his influence, wrote to the King of Prussia, 'that "you are now determined to assume an attitude of complete neutrality. . . ." I do not understand you. Had such language fallen from the King of Hanover, or of Saxony, I could have understood it. But up to the present hour I have regarded Prussia as one of the Five Great Powers, which, since the Peace of 1815, have been the guarantors of treaties, the guardians of civilisation, the champions of right, and ultimate arbitrators of the nations; and I have for my part felt the holy duty to which they were thus divinely called, being at the same time perfectly alive to the obligations, serious as these are and fraught with danger, which it imposes. Renounce these obligations, my dear brother, and in so doing you renounce for Prussia the *status* she has hitherto held. And if the example thus set should find imitators, European Civilisation is abandoned as a plaything for the winds; right will no longer find a champion, nor the oppressed an umpire to appeal to.' <sup>2</sup> There was an anticipation of the Bismarck touch in the King's reply, which practically suggested that England might count herself lucky not to have Prussia as an open enemy. In fact, so far from being even benevolent, the neutrality of Prussia seems to have been employed in threatening Austria with a possible attack upon her flank

<sup>1</sup> *Life of the Prince Consort*, vol. iii. pp. 20-1.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 44.

should she take part in an offensive war against Russia.<sup>1</sup>

We have seen that the war was entered into by a divided Cabinet, with an avowed policy of limited liability. The same hesitating, uncertain methods at first marked the manner of its carrying on. In the long years of peace, and under the pressure of a huge debt, and the natural demand for economy, the military forces of Great Britain had been to a great extent neglected. Whether or not she was beloved, England had emerged from the Napoleonic War with a great prestige ; but men were apt to forget that that prestige had been the outcome of the expenditure of much blood and treasure. After the exhaustion occasioned by that war, it was, significantly enough, the one statesman who thoroughly understood military affairs, the great Duke, who was the most pacific and conciliatory in his general foreign policy. No doubt, if the pledges of treaties or the honour of the country had been involved, he would have spoken with no uncertain voice ; but on ordinary occasions he was careful scrupulously to avoid causes of quarrel. It was a danger to the nation that his rivals and successors, such as Canning and Palmerston, adopted the grand manner, without having behind them grand armies. If the Roman could always have his citizenship respected, it was because, in the last resort, there was the ultimate sanction of the Roman legions. Heaven forbid that we should minimise moral considerations in the international dealings of men ; nevertheless the grim truth holds good that, when

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Lord Aberdeen*, by Sir A. Gordon, p. 247.

you are dealing with independent Powers, unless there is the presence, or the possibility—witness the military history of the Empire in the recent great war—of military strength, the assertion of moral precepts may lead to difficulties. Lord John Russell and Lord Palmerston were both to experience this unpleasant lesson some years later in the case of Poland and of Denmark. Meanwhile, if the military history of the Crimean War was largely a record of official failure and mismanagement, brilliantly redeemed by the valour of the British armies in the field, the giant of the north proved equally vulnerable; so that a war, entered upon half-heartedly, and pursued for a time half-heartedly, could be ended without any loss to British honour or prestige. But in the existing state of things there was need first for a parliamentary *débâcle*, and for the resignation of the Ministry. The new Prime Minister, Lord Palmerston, doubtless embodied more than any other living statesman the temper of his fellow-countrymen. But, in his desire to bring the war to a successful close, he was handicapped by the attitude of his old friend Napoleon III. Napoleon had entered into the war upon personal grounds, and, when his personal interests seemed satisfied, he was ready to be quit of the business. In these circumstances, Lord John Russell was sent to take part in negotiations at Vienna to ‘serve as a proof to show we are in earnest in our wish for peace and in our determination to have satisfactory terms.’<sup>1</sup> Lord John was ‘instructed that the end to be held

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Lord Palmerston, 1846-1865*, by E. Ashley, vol. ii. p. 77. Letter to his brother.

in view was the admission of Turkey into the great European family, and that there were certain points which must be insisted upon as necessary fully to attain this object. They lay under four principal heads, viz. the Principalities, the free navigation of the Danube, Russian supremacy in the Black Sea, and the independence of the Porte.' <sup>1</sup> Austrian propositions of peace, which had been accepted by Lord John at Vienna, were held to be unsatisfactory by the Home Government. In this connexion we may note the powerful protest of Disraeli against the combination of 'an aggressive war with a protective diplomacy.' 'By this chronic diplomacy,' he said, 'you not only check and destroy the spirit of the nation upon which, after all, you must rely, but by those very Conferences you are paralysing your allies and preventing that energy and exertion on the part of the European Powers which may be necessary to enable you to carry on your aggressive warfare, and to extricate you from the dangers which you must meet.' <sup>2</sup> Lord John Russell was willing to modify the British demands with regard to the Black Sea, in return for obtaining the guarantee of Austria to the terms of the treaty. 'After all,' he wrote in a memorandum, 'the security of the Porte is not with England a vital question like the independence of Belgium or of Portugal. It is a European object, to attain which Great Britain is bound to contribute her full share but no more.' <sup>3</sup>

The French representative at Vienna had been in

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 84.

<sup>2</sup> *Selected Speeches*, vol. ii. pp. 76-7.

<sup>3</sup> *Life of Lord J. Russell*, vol. ii. p. 259.



agreement with Lord John, but the Emperor of the French was warned by his generals that it would not be safe to make peace before securing the fall of Sebastopol.<sup>1</sup> Consequently France fell into line with Great Britain in the rejection of the Austrian terms.

With the fall of Sebastopol the situation was altered ; and henceforth France was eager for peace. England, even under Lord Palmerston, had no desire to extort harder terms than such as would have been sanctioned at Vienna ; and accordingly, on March 30, 1856, the treaty of Paris was signed. Under that treaty Great Britain, Austria, France, Prussia, Russia, and Sardinia declared the Sublime Porte admitted to participate in the advantages of the public law and system (concert) of Europe. They engaged each on her part to respect the independence and the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire, and guaranteed in common the strict observance of that engagement. Any act tending to its violation should be regarded as 'a question of general interest.' If there should arise between the Porte and any one of the signatory Powers any misunderstanding, before having recourse to coercive measures, the Power concerned pledged itself to afford the other contracting parties the opportunity of preventing such an extremity by means of their mediation.

The Black Sea was neutralised ; its waters and its ports being thrown open to the mercantile marine of every nation and, formally and in perpetuity, interdicted to ships of war.

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Lord J. Russell*, vol. ii. p. 204.

The navigation of the Danube was entrusted to the regulation of a European Commission ; and the Principalities were placed under the guarantee of the Contracting Powers, no exclusive protection being exercised over them by any of the guaranteeing Powers.<sup>1</sup> The conclusions arrived at were singularly unfortunate with regard to the treatment of Turkish subjects. If it was necessary, from the point of view of the balance of power, to guarantee the security of the Turkish Empire, it was absolutely necessary that measures should be taken and maintained to enforce the proper behaviour of Turkey as a member of a civilised Community. And yet consider the ostrich-like and cowardly manner in which this subject was burked.

‘ His Imperial Majesty the Sultan, having, in his constant solicitude for the welfare of his subjects, issued a Firman, which, while ameliorating their condition, without distinction of religion or of race, records his generous intentions towards the Christian populations of his Empire, and wishing to give a further proof of his sentiments in that respect, has resolved to communicate to the contracting parties the said Firman emanating spontaneously from his Sovereign Will.’<sup>2</sup>

On paper the Firman was all that could be desired. The Contracting Powers recognise the high value of this communication. It is clearly understood that it cannot, in any case, give to the said Powers the right to interfere, either collectively or sepa-

<sup>1</sup> *The European Concert and the Eastern Question*, by T. Holland, pp. 245-51.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 246, Article IX.

rately, in the relations of his Majesty the Sultan with his subjects, nor in the internal administration of his Empire.'

Contrast with this smooth language the words of Lord Stratford, the Turks' best friend, addressed to the Turkish Prime Minister a very few years before. 'I have frequently had occasion of late, and indeed for some years past, to bring to the knowledge of the Porte such atrocious instances of cruelty, rapine, and murder, as I have found with extreme concern in the Consular Reports, exhibiting generally the disturbed and misgoverned condition of many parts of Roumelia, and calling loudly for redress from the Imperial Government. The character of these disorderly and brutal outrages may be said in truth to be in general that of Mussulman fanaticism, excited by cupidity and hatred against the Sultan's Christian subjects. . . . The evil nevertheless has not been permanently removed, and the effect of every partial check has been of short duration.'<sup>1</sup>

By their acquiescence in this neglect, when the opportunity occurred, of the interests of the Christian subjects of the Porte, the British Government were laying the seed of the future troubles, which occurred when, some twenty years later, political interests, through the mouth of Disraeli, demanded one policy, and the claims of morality, passionately voiced by Gladstone, seemed to necessitate another. The rule is always made good : by shirking difficulties, when they can be met, a situation arises in which whatever is done can be shown to have bad consequences.

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Lord J. Russell*, vol. ii. p. 193.

The problem of the near East had been for the time solved, in however temporary and unsatisfactory a manner ; but a new question arose to disturb the dovecotes of European diplomacy. As early as July, 1846, Palmerston had written to Lord John Russell : 'Italy is the weak part of Europe, and the next war that breaks out in Europe will probably arise out of Italian affairs. The government of the Papal States is intolerably bad ; nothing can make men submit to such misrule but physical force and despair of external assistance.' <sup>1</sup>

In February, 1858, the British Ministry was defeated in an attempt to amend the law of conspiracy to meet the wishes of Napoleon III., and a Tory Administration returned again to office, if not to power. Meanwhile relations between France and Austria were becoming strained. The French Emperor used language to the Austrian Ambassador at the New Year's day reception of the diplomatic corps which seemed to threaten war. Lord Malmesbury, who had again become Foreign Secretary, assured the Queen (December 10th, 1858) that war was not contemplated by the French Emperor. 'Your Majesty may be assured that no warlike preparations are making in France, such as must precede such a plan as an Italian War.' <sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, in the preceding July, an interview at Plombières between Louis Napoleon and Cavour paved the way for a confederacy between the two Powers. In the Spring of 1859 Sardinia prepared for war with

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Lord Palmerston*, by Sir Henry Lytton Bulwer, vol. iii. p. 915.

<sup>2</sup> *Letters of Queen Victoria*, vol. iii. p. 306.

Austria. Austria retaliated by a curt summons to disarm; and, when this was disregarded, invaded Piedmont. Meanwhile an attempt by the British Ministry to mediate between France and Austria, through Lord Cowley, the ambassador at Paris, met with failure, and the French forces entered upon a successful campaign. Even the Queen, who was strongly pro-German in her sympathies, recognised that Austria had put herself in the wrong. 'Though it is originally the wicked folly of Russia and France that have brought about this fearful crisis,' she wrote to her Uncle Leopold, 'it is the madness and blindness of Austria which have brought on the war *now*. It has put *them* in the wrong, and entirely changed the feeling here, which was all that one could desire, into the most vehement sympathy for Sardinia.' <sup>1</sup>

Undoubtedly the general belief that the Conservative Ministry supported the Austrian pretensions did them no little harm at the General Election of 1859. For some reason, which is not yet clear, Disraeli delayed the publication of the Blue Book, which, when it afterwards appeared, proved to be a complete vindication of their proceedings. Lord Malmesbury suggests that the reason is to be sought in Disraeli having postponed the reading of the documents.<sup>2</sup> But laziness was not characteristic of Disraeli; whilst the suggestion of his biographer that he may have been influenced by his general distrust of Lord Malmesbury is still less credible.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Letters of Queen Victoria*, vol. iii. p. 344.

<sup>2</sup> *Memoirs of an Ex-Minister*, vol. ii. p. 189.

<sup>3</sup> *Life of B. Disraeli*, by G. E. Buckle, vol. iv. pp. 252-3.

Malmesbury wrote to Disraeli : ‘ The policy of insisting and threatening is Palmerstonian, and would commit us to one side or the other. From the moment we show a bias to one side our influence is gone, because they are now *bidding* for our friendship. We never can, I hope, be induced to join a protectorate of Italy. We have enough of the Protectorate, Belgium, who will probably be invaded by one of its protectors, and now, of the Principalities, whose protectors are all pulling different ways. England always acts *de bonne foi* in these cases, and therefore has the disadvantage of being like a respectable clergyman, co-trustee with five horse-dealers.’ <sup>1</sup>

The policy of the British Government was expressed in the following Dispatch addressed to the various German Courts. ‘ I have to acquaint you that Her Majesty’s Government witness with great anxiety the disposition shown by the States of Germany to enter at once into a contest with France. Her Majesty’s Government cannot perceive that, at the present moment, Germany has any grounds for declaring war against that Power, and still less would the Confederation, in their opinion, be justified in prematurely adopting any course which would bring on a European War.

‘ It is desirable, however, that the Governments of Germany should entertain no doubt as to the course which in such a case Her Majesty’s Government would pursue, and therefore you are accredited that if Germany should at present, and without a *casus foederis*, be so ill-advised as to provoke a war with

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 228-9.

France, and should, without any sufficient cause, make general a war which, on every account, ought, if possible, to be localised, Her Majesty's Government, determined to maintain a strict neutrality, can give to Germany no assistance, nor contribute by the interposition of the naval forces of this country to protect her coast from hostile attack.' (May 2, 1859.)<sup>1</sup>

No doubt this attitude of the British Government was perfectly correct, and probably represented the views of the majority of the British electorate. Still there were thousands of Englishmen to whom the land of Virgil, of Dante, and of Petrarch was not as other lands, and to whom its redemption seemed a cause more sacred than the strict enforcement of legal documents. Apart from the sympathies of foreigners, the courageous opportunism of Victor Emmanuel, the subtle statesmanship of Cavour, and the romantic foolhardiness of Garibaldi were working for a common object. Intimidated, as seems certain, by the Carbonari, Louis Napoleon, the self-elected champion of the Church, fought for an anti-Papal Italy, and, as the cynical asserted, worked to create for France another Prussia on the south-east. Napoleon III., however, did not work for nothing; and the acquisition of Savoy and Nice, whether or not the result of previous bargaining, shocked the conscience of Europe, and caused the French to appear to the people of Italy in a light other than that of disinterested deliverers.

During this time the Ministry of Lord Derby had been succeeded by an Administration, the leading

<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs of an Ex-Minister*, vol. ii. p. 205.

members of which were as Italian in their sympathies as were the Italians themselves. The Prime Minister, Palmerston, was, an unkind critic might suggest, always a reformer in every country but his own. Lord John Russell believed that the sacred principles of 1688 were always and everywhere applicable, and another minister, who did not often see eye to eye with these veterans on questions of foreign policy, had been made, by special circumstances, a devoted adherent to the cause of a United Italy. Mr. Gladstone, as a casual visitor in 1850, had had the opportunity to put his hands into the open wounds of persecuted Naples, and the impression left upon him was great and lasting.<sup>1</sup> 'I little thought,' he wrote in July, 1859, 'to have lived to see the day when the conclusion of a Peace should in my mind cause disgust rather than impart relief. But that day has come. I appreciate all the difficulties of the position both of the King of Sardinia and of Count Cavour. . . . The duties of England in respect to the Italian Question are limited by her powers, and these are greatly confined. But her sentiments cannot change, because they are founded upon a regard to the deepest among those principles which regulate the intercourse of men and their formation into political societies.'<sup>2</sup> But the proposed settlement of Villa Franca proved unworkable. An Italian Confederation, with several of the Italian States Austrian puppets, was an absurdity; and the reinstatement of the Grand Duke of Tuscany and the Duke of Modena against

<sup>1</sup> *Garibaldi and the Thousand*, by G. M. Trevelyan, pp. 48-54.

<sup>2</sup> *Life of Gladstone*, by J. Morley, vol. i. pp. 647-8.



the wishes of their inhabitants could not be effected. Venetia had to remain Austrian till a later date ; but Tuscany, Modena, Parma, and the Romagna, along with Lombardy, became peacefully incorporated in the Kingdom of Victor Emmanuel. Apart from Venice there still remained Naples and Sicily and the States of the Church to be dealt with, and then the dream would be fulfilled of a United Italy.

Palmerston and Lord John were prepared to join with France in resisting Austria should she determine to prevent by force the inclusion of the Duchies in the Kingdom of Piedmont ; and the Queen wrote (December 2, 1859) : ‘ The Queen was extremely sorry to find from Lord John Russell’s letter of yesterday that he contemplates the possibility of our joining France in a fresh Italian War or demonstration of war against Austria, which the Queen had put entirely out of the question. If the Emperor of the French were allowed to believe in such a possibility, he would have it in his power to bring it about, or obtain a just cause of complaint against us, if we abandoned him. It would be just as dangerous and unfair towards the Emperor to mislead him in this respect as it would be for the Queen to conceal from Lord John that under no pretence will she depart from the position of neutrality in the Italian quarrel, and inflict upon her country and Europe the calamity of war on that account.’<sup>1</sup> Again : ‘ The Queen is determined to hold to her neutrality in the Italian intrigues, revolutions, and wars. It is true Lord John says, “ it becomes a great Power like Great Britain to

<sup>1</sup> *Letters of Queen Victoria*, vol. iii. pp. 374-5.

preserve the peace of Europe by throwing her great weight into the scale which has justice on its side." But where justice lies admits of every variety of opinion.' The Queen added shrewdly enough: 'Has Lord John ever contemplated the probability of Austria not being abandoned a second time by Germany, when attacked by France? The Emperor is sure to have calculated upon this, and has not played his game badly, if he can get the alliance of England to sanction and foster his attack upon the Rhine which would inevitably follow.' <sup>1</sup>

In September, 1860, whilst declaring that the state of affairs in Italy was very distressing, Queen Victoria confessed that 'the miserable, weak, and foolish conduct of the King of Naples and the squabbles of the whole family take away all one's sympathy.' <sup>2</sup> She does not therefore seem to have protested as strongly as might have been expected against the famous dispatch of October 27, 1860, in which Lord John gave expression to the views of liberal England. 'There appear to have been two motives,' he wrote, 'which have induced the people of the Roman and Neapolitan States to have joined willingly in the subversion of their Governments. The first of these was that the Government of the Pope and the King of the two Sicilies provided so ill for the administration of justice, the protection of personal liberty, and the general welfare of the people, that their subjects looked forward to the overthrow of their rulers as a necessary preliminary to all improvement in their condition.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 376.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 407-8.

‘The second motive was that a conviction had spread, since the year 1848, that the only manner in which the Italians could secure their independence of foreign control was by forming one strong Government for the whole of Italy. . . .

‘Looking at the question in this view, Her Majesty’s Government must admit that the Italians themselves are the best judges of their own interests. . . .

‘Her Majesty’s Government do not feel justified in declaring that the people of Southern Italy had not good reason for throwing off their allegiance to their former Governments. Her Majesty’s Government, therefore, cannot pretend to blame the King of Sardinia for assisting them. . . .

‘Such having been the causes and concomitant circumstances of the revolution of Italy, Her Majesty’s Government can see no sufficient grounds for the severe censure with which Austria, France, Prussia, and Russia have visited the acts of the King of Sardinia. Her Majesty’s Government will turn their eyes rather to the gratifying prospect of a people building up the edifice of their liberties and consolidating the work of their independence amid the sympathies and good wishes of Europe.’<sup>1</sup>

‘Ever since your famous dispatch,’ wrote Mr. Odo Russell, Lord John’s nephew, from Rome, ‘you are blessed night and morning by twenty millions of Italians. . . . The moment it was published in Italian thousands of people copied it from each other to carry it to their homes and weep over it for joy

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Lord J. Russell*, by Spencer Walpole, vol. ii. pp. 325-7.

and gratitude in the bosom of their families, away from brutal mercenaries and greasy priests.' <sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, the Prince Regent of Prussia was 'very unhappy about Lord John Russell's last published Despatch, which he calls a tough morsel to digest, in which he sees a disruption of the law of nations, as hitherto recognised, and of the holy ties which bound peoples and sovereigns, and a declaration on the part of England that, wheresoever there exists any dissatisfaction among a people, they have the privilege to expel their sovereign, with the assured certainty of England's sympathy. The Prince sees great difficulty in the way of future agreement with England, if that is to be the basis of her policy.' <sup>2</sup> Palmerston had written on the previous January that the policy of England was to 'take our stand upon the principle that no force should be employed for the purpose of imposing upon the people of Italy any form of government or constitution; that is to say, that the people of Italy, and especially of Central Italy, should be left free to determine their own condition of political existence.' <sup>3</sup>

Moreover, it proved possible for Great Britain to help Italy by means other than generous words. After the conquest of Sicily by Garibaldi, Napoleon was desirous of preserving the Bourbon dynasty on the mainland, under French direction, and therefore planned a naval combination between France and England to hold the Straits of Messina against the passage of Garibaldi's forces. Lord John, puzzled by the tortuous conduct of Victor Emmanuel and

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 428.

<sup>2</sup> *Life of the Prince Consort*, vol. v. p. 226.

<sup>3</sup> *Life of Lord Palmerston*, 1846-65, vol. ii. p. 175.

Cavour regarding the invasion of Calabria by Garibaldi, was nearly falling into this trap ; and it was only the intervention of Mr. James Lacaita, an exile from Naples, who was the intimate friend of the Russell family, that saved the situation. ' If France chose to interfere alone,' Lord John finally wrote, ' we shall merely disapprove her course and protest against it. In our opinion the Neapolitans ought to be masters either to reject or to receive Garibaldi.'

' Napoleon was not prepared,' Mr. Trevelyan adds, ' to take a course against which England would protest, and the project of foreign intervention fell dead.'<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, Naples along with Sicily fell a ripe fruit into the hands of Victor Emmanuel.

It is pleasant to note the course of British policy towards Italy, because here, at least, material interests were not involved. It is easy in a world wherein the victory too often seems to belong to brute power to decry the influence of sentiment. Nevertheless, amongst men capable of feeling sentiment counts for a great deal ; and the close sympathy that has always existed between the peoples of united Italy and of Great Britain may have had something to do with Italy's final decision to break with the Triple Alliance and to seek safety in the company of the Western Powers.

The annexation of Savoy and Nice to France killed for the time the possibility of an Anglo-French alliance. Louis Napoleon resented so bitterly the criticisms of the London press that he used language to Lord Cowley which seemed almost to presage war.

<sup>1</sup> *Garibaldi and the Making of Italy*, pp. 104-9.

His subsequent behaviour, however, proved that he had acted under momentary pique, and Lord Cowley was able to vindicate the honour of his country, without embittering the quarrel. Still, the Emperor was undoubtedly in an unsettled frame of mind, and, disappointed with England, was busy meditating new schemes by which he could help forward his root idea of remodelling, peacefully, if possible, the map of Europe. Palmerston informed the Queen in November, 1861, that he had heard from a source likely to be well informed that at the interview between the Emperor and the King of Prussia at Compiègne, the Emperor said to the King 'that there were three systems of alliance between which France and Prussia might choose: an alliance of France with England, an alliance of Prussia with England, an alliance of France with Prussia. The first, the Emperor said, now to a certain degree exists, but is precarious, and not likely to last long, because England is too exacting; the second would not be useful to Prussia, but might be dangerous, inasmuch as it would look like hostility to France, and England would not be likely to back Prussia effectually if a rupture took place between Prussia and France. The last was the system best for Prussia, and was calculated to promote her interests; at all events the Emperor hoped that if at any time there should be a rupture between France and England, Prussia would remain neutral.'<sup>1</sup>

Prussia was not at this time in the least inclined to listen to the voice of the French charmer; and the only result of the French intrigue was to draw

<sup>1</sup> *Letters of Queen Victoria*, vol. iii. p. 467.

closer the links between England, Prussia, and Austria, in the interests of the maintenance of the *status quo*. The Queen had written to Palmerston in the preceding June: 'What is required and is now attainable for the general security is a mutual agreement between the three Powers, that each should make known to the other two any overture or proposition, direct or indirect, which either of the three may receive from France, tending to any change of the existing state of territorial possession in Europe, and that no answer should be given to such overture or proposal until the Government to which it may have been made shall have had an answer from the other two to the communication so made. Anything short of this will not affect the object of giving absolute confidence.'<sup>1</sup> An agreement substantially to this effect seems to have been arrived at by the three Powers.<sup>2</sup>

To the Prince Consort, the state of things in Europe caused no little alarm. 'Our Ministers,' he wrote to Baron Stockmar in 1860, 'have waked up at last. . . . Now, however, the weak and distracted state of Europe, and of Germany in particular, which is simply due to the fact that the Napoleonic policy has been allowed full swing, will be put forward by many as imposing upon England as a duty not to engage in any Continental struggle with France, as this would be to turn round upon an approved ally. In Germany the condition of things must be deplorable. Austria in a state of decomposition, and Prussia without energetic guidance and force of

<sup>1</sup> *Life of the Prince Consort*, vol. v. p. 121.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 121-2.

conviction.’<sup>1</sup> Here, at any rate, this shrewd judgment was soon proved to be at fault. Prussia was assuredly no longer ‘without energetic guidance’ when she obtained Bismarck for her chief Minister, and Von Moltke as the organiser of victory.

How far Louis Napoleon was really a danger to the peace of Europe must always remain one of the unsolved problems of history. Without doubt vague plans for the remodelling of Europe, by France obtaining the frontier of the Rhine, and Prussia obtaining compensation in other directions; by the Danubian Principalities being assigned to Austria, or by the formation of a new Eastern Kingdom, Belgium becoming at the same time incorporated with France—dreams such as these—haunted his active mind; and in the case of an autocrat the dream of to-day may find its accomplishment on the morrow. On the other hand, Louis Napoleon’s will power was much weaker than his intellect. He belonged to the order of men

“Letting ‘I dare not’ wait upon ‘I would,’  
Like the poor cat i’ the adage.”

He clung to friendship with England as the sheet anchor of his policy, and maintained a chivalrous loyalty and devotion to Queen Victoria. In spite of his revolutionary wanderings, he was at heart Conservative; and it probably needed the bait of the Prussian tempter to cause him to appear upon the surface as the disturber of the peace of Europe.

We have seen how, in 1832, Otho of Bavaria became King of Greece. Unhappily, he proved to

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 87-8.



have been a most unfortunate choice ; and, in October, 1862, he was deposed. The National Assembly offered the vacant throne to Prince William, the second son of the King of Denmark, in 1863, and at a conference held in London the three guaranteeing Powers confirmed this choice. A Treaty was signed at London on July 13, 1863, declaring Prince William to be ' King of the Greeks ' under the title of George I. It should be noted, in the light of recent controversy, that it was affirmed, in the 3rd Article of the Treaty, ' that Greece, under . . . the guarantee of the three Courts, forms a monarchical, independent, and *constitutional* State.' <sup>1</sup>

Under a Convention of 1800 between Russia and the Porte it had been agreed that the Ionian Islands, which had been recently seized by the French, should form a self-governing tributary republic under the suzerainty of the Porte. By the Treaty of Paris of 1815 they were recognised as ' an independent state ' ' under the immediate and exclusive protection of the King of Great Britain and Ireland.'

There was agitation in the islands in favour of union with Greece ; and England, having no desire to coerce them, became a willing party to the Treaty of November 14, 1863, by which the Five Powers, signatories to the Treaty of Paris, accepted the renunciation of the Protectorate of the Ionian Islands by the Queen of England, and recognised their union with the Hellenic kingdom.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Text of Treaty in *The European Concert in the Eastern Question*, by T. G. Holland, pp. 40-44.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 45-50.

Elated by the success which had attended the efforts for the redemption of Italy, the British Government found themselves in 1863 confronted with a very different problem. We have already seen that, though Poland came within the purview of the Treaty of Vienna, the terms with regard to it were so vague as practically to preclude the interference of the Parties to the treaty. Even the more definite provisions as to Cracow had not, in fact, admitted such interference. When, therefore, trouble again arose in Poland and a Polish insurrection aroused the sympathies of liberal Europe, there were two courses possible. Either the British Government could have made clear to the world that, regrettable as might be what was happening, it was no concern of England, and a policy of non-intervention would be strictly maintained, or else the Russian doings should have been openly proclaimed such a crime against civilisation as called for abatement from the civilised Powers. Assuredly, if the first course was intended to be taken, it was most urgent that the unfortunate Poles should not be buoyed up with the hopes of British assistance. According to the British Ambassador at St. Petersburg, the measure which provoked the insurrection was 'a simple plan by a clean sweep of the revolutionary youth of Poland to kidnap the opposition and to carry it off to Siberia or the Caucasus.'<sup>1</sup> We may, then, freely admit that the Polish insurrection of 1863 was the result of cruel provocation. But granting all this, the hard fact remained that on the Polish Question, Russia and Prussia would stand

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Lord Palmerston*, 1846-65, vol. ii. p. 130.

united ; so that, in case of war, the two Western Powers would find themselves confronted with their old adversary of the Crimean War, now supported by a powerful assistant. Moreover, the agreement of Austria with the Western Powers was, of necessity, half-hearted. In this situation, unless honour or duty imperatively compelled intervention, the path of safety doubtless lay in standing aside. Nor does it seem that the British Ministry ever really meditated war. Unhappily, Lord Russell<sup>1</sup> was so enamoured of his own liberal sermonising that he forgot that it might not be so welcome to other ears. To suggest that the Russians should restore to the Poles the constitution of Alexander I. was a vain proceeding, unless he could first have felt the pulse of the Russian Government. After having ineffectually endeavoured to put in force the Concert of Europe, Lord Russell next launched a dispatch which, if it meant anything, involved the threat of war.

‘The question, then,’ he wrote, ‘having arisen whether the engagements taken by Russia by the Treaty of Vienna have been and are now being faithfully carried into execution, Her Majesty’s Government, with deep regret, feel bound to say that the question must be answered in the negative. . . . Her Majesty’s Government, therefore, most earnestly entreat the Government of Russia to give their most serious attention to all the foregoing considerations : and Her Majesty’s Government would beg, moreover, to submit to the Imperial

<sup>1</sup> Lord John entered the House of Lords as Earl Russell in 1861.

Government that, besides the obligations of treaties, Russia, as a member of the community of European States, has duties of comity towards other nations to fulfil. The condition of things which has now for a long course of time existed in Poland is a source of danger, not to Russia alone, but also to the general peace of Europe.

‘The disturbances which are perpetually breaking out among the Polish subjects of His Imperial Majesty necessarily produce a serious agitation of opinion in other countries of Europe, tending to excite much anxiety in the minds of their Governments, and which might under possible circumstances produce complications of the most serious nature.’<sup>1</sup>

(A little earlier the Prime Minister had written to the Russian Ambassador, who was a personal friend, that the Polish insurrection was a just punishment from heaven for Russian conduct, in encouraging insurrection in Moldo-Wallachia, Servia, and Bosnia, and trusted that Prince Gortschakoff would be told the impression made by his doings in England.)<sup>2</sup>

Following on this dispatch, Lord Russell had a conversation with the Russian Ambassador: ‘When I told him that the dispatch of Her Majesty’s Government was chiefly founded on the stipulations of the Treaty of Vienna, he expressed some satisfaction that we still founded our demands on the basis of that treaty. But there was one question he felt he

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *Essays on Foreign Politics*, by Lord Salisbury, p. 197.

<sup>2</sup> *Life of Lord Palmerston*, 1846-65, vol. ii., pp. 230 1.

was entitled to ask, and that was whether the communication Her Majesty's Government was about to make at St. Petersburg was of a pacific nature. I replied that it was ; but that, as I did not wish to mislead him, I must say something more. Her Majesty's Government had no intentions that were otherwise than pacific, still less a Concert with other Powers for any but pacific purposes. *But the state of things might change.* The present overture of Her Majesty's Government might be rejected, as the representation of March 2 had been rejected, by the Imperial Government.' If this meant anything it threatened war in case of rejection.

Lord Russell's representations were rejected politely but plainly. The resources of his eloquence were then concentrated on demanding six definite concessions. These were (1) an amnesty, (2) a Representative System, (3) a Polish administration, (4) Liberty of Conscience, (5) the use of the Polish language, and (6) a regulation of the system of Conscription. These six points were to be dealt with at a Conference of the Powers which signed the Treaty of Vienna.

Such a dispatch was in the nature of an Ultimatum, and it was so regarded throughout Europe. The traditional enthusiasm of the French for the Poles was great ; and Napoleon III. seemed ready to embark in a war in which he would have had the whole of France behind him. When, however, the British claim was treated by Prince Gortschakoff with refusal and contempt, it appeared that Lord Russell had shot his last bolt ; and nothing was left but a humiliating retreat. One last effort was

indeed made to retrieve the situation. A final dispatch was launched containing the wonderful statement that in the opinion of the British Government, Russia had forfeited the title to Poland which she had acquired by the Treaty of Vienna. 'When the dispatch reached St. Petersburg it was shown to Prince Gortschakoff before being formally presented. "You had better not present this concluding sentence to me," is reported to have been the Prince's brief but significant observation. The hint was taken; the dispatch was sent back to England and submitted anew to the Foreign Secretary. Doubtless with disgust, but bowing to his inexorable destiny, he executed this new act of self-abasement. The offending sentence was erased by its author with the resolution of a Christian martyr. In this form it was sent back to Russia; and it still bears as published to the world, in the bald mutilation of the paragraph with which it concludes and in the confusion of its dates, the marks of its enforced and reluctant revision.' <sup>1</sup>

Lord Salisbury was, as we all know, a strong opponent of the Whig Ministry, but the quotations from the Parliamentary Papers, apart from his scathing comments, prove his case to the hilt. Moreover, the four pages in which the Polish episode is treated by Mr. Spencer Walpole in his *Life of Lord Russell*, do not set up a very plausible defence. To bluster and then give in; to excite fervent hopes and then to disappoint them; to threaten and then to bow meekly before a note of warning—such was British foreign policy as practised by men whose

<sup>1</sup> *Essays on Foreign Politics*, pp. 203-4.

minds lived in the spacious days of British predominance, but whose military estimates were, to a great extent, regulated by Mr. Gladstone.

It would be almost incredible were it not proved to be the fact that Lord Russell learnt nothing from the lesson of 1863. The Sleswig-Holstein question found him equally truculent on paper and equally impotent in fact. In one respect the question was much simpler than that of Poland. By the Treaty of London of May, 1852, the high contracting Parties (Great Britain, Austria, France, Prussia, Russia, Sweden, and Norway, on the one part, and Denmark, on the other part) acknowledged as permanent the principle of the integrity of the Danish Monarchy. 'The Powers who signed that treaty,' Lord Russell wrote (December 17, 1863), 'must recollect that they bound themselves thereby not to Denmark alone, but to Great Britain, France, Russia, and Sweden . . . and that the declared object and purpose of that treaty was not to regulate the reciprocal relations of Denmark and Germany, but to serve as an arrangement essential for the general interests of Europe.

'A violation of the engagements taken by Denmark in 1851-2 is fair subject of complaint, and for which redress may justly be demanded. But such violation cannot cancel a solemn European engagement taken towards other parties. The promises made by Denmark in January, 1852, regarding Holstein and Sleswig may have been the prevailing motive with Austria and Prussia for entering into the treaty of May, 1852; but these Powers cannot with any

show of reason allege, as an excuse for not remaining faithful to the obligations of that treaty, that their expectations as to the fulfilment by Denmark of her engagements (taken at another time in other documents) have been disappointed.

‘The whole foundations of the Treaty Stipulations of Europe would be subverted if such a reason could be admitted as an excuse for breaking a plain and simple treaty engagement. Any Sovereign when called upon to fulfil his engagements might say : “My motive for concluding that Treaty with you was that I had other engagements with one of the parties of that Treaty. Those other engagements have not been kept, and, therefore, my Treaty with you will be null and void.”’

‘Her Majesty’s Government are convinced that the Court of Berlin will see that such a process of reasoning, if admitted to be valid, might shake to pieces any existing treaty. . . . Let it suffice at present for Her Majesty’s Government to declare that they would consider any departure from the Treaty of Succession of 1852 by Powers who signed . . . that Treaty as entirely inconsistent with good faith.’<sup>1</sup>

It will be noted that the question is here argued quite apart from the wrongs or rights of the Sleswig-Holstein controversy ; nor indeed is it necessary to enter into that Serbonian bog in order to pronounce judgment upon the policy of Lord Russell. Robert Morier, who maintained with great learning and ability the justice of the German claim, was still far from being convinced by ‘the cynical sophistries of

<sup>1</sup> *Select Treaties and Documents*, ed. by R. B. Mowat, pp.68-69.



Bismarck.’<sup>1</sup> We know from their own mouths the considerations affecting the German people with regard to the question. A report of the Committee of the House of Representatives in Berlin recognised, in 1860, that ‘without these Duchies an effectual protection of the coasts of Germany and of the North Sea is impossible.’ The Reporter of another Committee declared that ‘the Duchies are for Germany and Prussia a strong bulwark under all circumstances against any attack coming from the North. This, as well as their maritime position, is an advantage which Prussia can never relinquish.’ ‘What interest,’ said another distinguished German, ‘has Prussia in the maintenance of the London Protocol? Since the time of the great Elector Prussian policy has always been rightly directed towards gaining the north German Peninsula for Germany.’<sup>2</sup>

In the face of utterances such as these, it is not uncharitable to suggest that the learned arguments of Max Müller and others to prove the justice of the German case were so much dust thrown in the eyes of an ignorant Europe. If the choice of the people could decide, it would seem that Sleswig, with the exception of certain German immigrants, would certainly have thrown in its lot with Denmark, and Holstein, in all probability, with Germany. But they were solemnly dealt with as Siamese twins, who would perish by being cut apart; and because Holstein no doubt belonged to the Germanic Confederation (though in no way to Prussia), Sleswig

<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs and Letters of Sir R. Morier*, vol. i. p. 410.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by Lord Salisbury, *op. cit.* p. 72.

must also be drawn into the same political arrangements.

Moreover, whatever may have been the rights of the Germanic Confederation, Austria and Prussia, as separate states, had no *locus standi* in the Sleswig-Holstein controversy ; but it was Prussia and Austria, not the Confederation, by whom the Gordian knot was cut.

The lot of Denmark was indeed an unhappy one. The first German interference in 1848 had been of a genuinely nationalist character, the Germans in the Duchies being anxious to share with their brethren in the new revolutionary movement, whilst the German Governments were not averse to using this ground as a safety valve for the discontent seething around them. In 1851 Austrian and Prussian troops appeared upon the scene, to restore the authority of the Danish King, upon terms. These terms were the guarantee against the incorporation of Sleswig with Denmark. The King had granted to the Danes a liberal Constitution ; and it was the fear of the influence such a Constitution might exercise in Germany that led the reactionary Powers to make the non-incorporation of Sleswig a condition precedent to the restoration of Holstein. In this state of things, anxious above all else to secure a satisfactory settlement with regard to the succession to the Danish throne, Denmark abandoned, if she ever held, the idea of a homogeneous Danish kingdom north of the Eyder, and agreed to the Austrian conditions. The Imperial Government 'learnt with satisfaction the resolution of H.M. the King of Denmark to revive, not only in the Duchy of Sleswig

but in that of Holstein, the institution of Provincial Estates, which still largely exists ; and when H.M. at the same time announces his intention of introducing an organic and homogeneous constitutional connection of all the parts of the country into one United Monarchy . . . the Imperial Court can only recognise this intention of the King as being directed to the fulfilment of a duty that cannot be declined.

‘ H.M. the Emperor expresses his confident expectation that the King, both in the future organisation of the monarchy and in the provisional conduct of affairs, will know how, with equal solicitude to all, to preserve, by appropriate arrangements, to all the various parts of the country the position which belongs to them as members of a whole, in which no part is subordinate to another. . . . The maintenance of independent constitutional administrative institutions in the various parts of the country, without prejudice to the combined government of their common affairs at the Centre, is, in our belief, an indispensable condition of the establishment of the internal tranquillity of the Monarchy.’ <sup>1</sup>

So long as Sleswig was kept clear of Denmark the Austrian Government was quite willing that the political separation between the two Duchies should be as marked as possible. The true meaning of the Austrian attitude was brought out by the following paragraph :

‘ As H.M. the Emperor sincerely desires to see the peace and prosperity of the Danish Monarchy established as soon as possible by a definite organisation adapted to its needs, he allows himself confidently

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Lord Salisbury, *op. cit.* pp. 98-9.

to hope that the Danish Government, in their efforts towards the important end, will perhaps not give an exclusive preference to those Institutions which have been bestowed upon the Kingdom of Denmark proper, but that they will keep before their eyes as their sole sure guide the permanent relations of the Collective Monarchy, and the object of strengthening internally its union as a whole. Once at ease upon this point, H.M. will not delay, in conjunction with other friendly Powers, to exert himself to secure that Union by an international guarantee of a common succession.' <sup>1</sup>

The meaning of this is clear enough. Once fall into the line of the politics of the German Monarchies, and we will treat you as one of ourselves.

But these undertakings were of necessity vague ; and when the Danish Government proceeded to endeavour to establish a moderate constitutional system for the whole Monarchy, the Holstein Estates (1853) met it with the *non possumus* ' that a beneficial co-existence of all parts of the state could not be obtained, except by the re-establishment of an absolute government with only Consultative assemblies in all parts of the Monarchy.' <sup>2</sup> In 1858 the Committee of the German Diet declared that the Parliamentary Government of Denmark involved ' a limitation of the liberty of action of the Royal Ducal Government, scarcely reconcilable with the principles of the Confederation.' <sup>3</sup>

The Danish Government chose to persist in its course ; and thenceforth all parties in Germany were agreed in maintaining the German pretensions.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 102-3.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 105.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

Because the Duchies had been promised equal treatment, it was seriously maintained that the little German duchy of Lauenburg should have equal representation with Denmark proper in the Danish Parliament. At last Denmark yielded so far as to revoke the Constitution of 1855, to the extent of not making it applicable to Holstein and Lauenburg. But its enemies were not thus to be appeased. German Nationalist feeling was running high ; and not even the decision wholly to separate the government of Denmark and Sleswig from that of the German Duchies served to placate the enemy. From 1860 onwards the wrongs of Sleswig made their appearance upon the scene. It was affirmed that a German community was being oppressed and that Sleswig was being incorporated with Denmark. Upon the first point the British Minister at Copenhagen reported, 'It appeared . . . that the populations of the mixed districts were in many instances subject to much petty annoyance and vexation on the part of the subordinate officials of the Danish Government ; that there was much discontent regarding the language question ; but that there was no inclination or desire, except on the part of some individuals suspected of being agents of the German party, for a junction with Holstein, and still less with Germany.'<sup>1</sup>

The second question, with regard to the incorporation of Sleswig with Denmark, is much more difficult. It is certain that the new Constitution of 1863 recognised the principle of administering common affairs by a general Constitution, and provincial affairs

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Lord Salisbury, *op. cit.* pp. 121-2.

by a provincial Constitution ; and the Danes might reasonably maintain that it fell under the provisions of the Austrian undertaking to ' acknowledge the full legitimacy of the endeavours (by proper modification or enlargement) to adapt the existing political institutions of all parts of the Monarchy to the organisation of the collective State to be established in the future upon conservative principles.' But, when the strong man is determined to pick a quarrel with his weak neighbour, it was not likely that such arguments should prevail ; and the accession to the throne of Denmark of a new dynasty in 1863 applied the match to the piled-up timber. So far as the right of Christian IX. to succeed also to the Duchies was concerned, the question had on paper been set at rest by the direct words of the Treaty of London, 1852, to which both Prussia and Austria were parties ; but treaties counted for little with German statesmen or German nationalists. ' The London Treaty,' wrote the distinguished historian, Von Sybel, ' is *contra bonos mores*. . . . It proposes to rivet a German population to the poisoned chain of Danish rule ' ;<sup>1</sup> and whether or not Denmark was wise in all its doings, it is extremely improbable that by any means it could have averted the final consummation.

It should be noted, moreover, that although, by the 5th Article of the Treaty of Prague (August 23, 1866), it was agreed that, under the transfer of Austrian rights in Sleswig and Holstein to Prussia, the inhabitants of Northern Sleswig were given the right to be reunited to Denmark should they so

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 138.

decide by a free vote, Prussia refused to carry out this undertaking.<sup>1</sup>

In this state of things, whilst Germany and Denmark stood on the brink of war and Lord Russell was writing anxious and ingenious dispatches, Great Britain put herself technically in the wrong by refusing the suggestion of the French Emperor to deal with the European situation by means of a European Congress. No doubt the reasons which led to this decision were sound ; but the fact of the refusal none the less showed how vain and unreal a thing had become the Concert of Europe. The letter to the King of the Belgians, in which Lord Palmerston explained his objections to the Congress, is from our point of view of extreme interest :

‘The truth is that the assembling of a Congress is not a measure applicable to the present state of Europe.

‘In 1815 a Congress was a necessity. France had overrun all Europe, had overthrown almost all the former territorial arrangements, and had established a new order of things. Then came the returning tide of the Allied armies overturning everything which France had created, and establishing for the moment military occupation of the greater part of Europe. It was absolutely necessary to determine when and in what proportions, and on what conditions, the vast regions reconquered from France should be thenceforward possessed. The Powers whose armies had made this reconquest were the natural and, indeed, the only arbiters ; and they

<sup>1</sup> The text of the Treaty is in *Les grands Traités Politiques*, par P. Albin, pp. 34-8.

had, by their armies, the means of carrying their decisions into effect.

‘ Nothing of the kind exists in the present state of Europe. There are no doubts as to who is the owner of any piece of territory, and there are not even any boundary questions in dispute.

‘ The functions of a Congress, if now to be assembled, might be twofold, and would bear either on the past or on the future, or on both. Drouyn says that the Congress might take up the Treaties of 1815, go through them article by article, strike out whatever has been repealed or set aside, and re-enact the remainder as the Treaty of 1863-4, the name of which would be less disagreeable to France than that of the Treaty of 1815, which brings to mind Waterloo and St. Helena. This may be a natural feeling for France ; but it is no good reason why all the rest of Europe should meet round a table to please the French nation ; and those who hold their estates under a good title, now nearly half-a-century old, might not be particularly desirous of having it brought under discussion with all those alterations which good-natured neighbours might wish to suggest in their boundaries.

‘ No doubt there have been some not unimportant changes made in the territorial arrangements of Europe established by the Treaty of 1815 ; but some of these were made regularly by treaty at the time, and the others, not so made, some of the parties to the Congress might not like to sanction by treaty acknowledgment.

‘ Chief among the first class is the separation of Belgium from Holland. . . . That transaction



requires no confirmation. Chief among the second class was the absorption of Cracow by Austria without any treaty sanction ; and to that transaction the British Government, which protested against it at the time, would not be greatly desirous of giving retrospective sanction by treaty now. Then come the cession of Lombardy to Italy, and of Savoy and Nice to France. These were legally made by the rightful owners of the ceded territory, and no confirmation can be required. . . .

‘ Then comes the absorption into the Kingdom of Italy of Tuscany, Parma, Modena, Emilia, Naples and Sicily. These were all violations of the Treaty of Vienna done without treaty sanction ; but they were the will of the people of those countries. Those transactions have been virtually sanctioned by all the Powers who have acknowledged the King of Italy ; and if Victor Emmanuel is wise, he would be content with leaving those matters as they are, the more especially because if a new European treaty were to describe the Kingdom of Italy as it now is, that treaty would be a virtual renunciation by the King of Italy to any claims to Venetia and Rome. On the other hand, Austria and the Pope would hardly be prepared to give their formal sanction to the acquisitions made by the Italian Kingdom.

‘ As to the past, then, the functions of the Congress would either be unnecessary or barred by insurmountable difficulties. But, then, as to the future ? Would the Congress have to range over the wide and almost endless extent of proposed and possible changes, or would it have to confine itself to questions

now practically pending ? There are but two such questions : the one relating to Poland ; the other to the difference between the German Confederation and Denmark about Holstein and Lauenburg and about Sleswig. As to Poland, would Russia be more likely to yield to a Congress than she has shown herself to be in a negotiation ? I much doubt it. And as to the question between Germany and Denmark, a smaller machinery than a European Congress might surely be sufficient to solve that question.

‘ But if the Congress were to enter upon the wide field of proposed and possible changes of territory, what squabbles and animosities would ensue ! Russia would ask to get back all she lost by the Treaty of Paris ; Italy would ask for Venetia and Rome ; France would plead geographically for the frontier of the Rhine ; Austria would show how advantageous it would be to Turkey to transfer to Austria Bosnia or Moldo-Wallachia ; Greece would have a word to say about Thessaly and Epirus ; Spain would wonder how England could think of retaining Gibraltar : Denmark would say that Sleswig is geographically part of Jutland, and that as Jutland is an integral part of Denmark, so ought Sleswig to be so too ; Sweden would claim Finland ; and some of the greater German States would strongly urge the expediency of mediatising a score of the smaller Princes.

‘ If the members of the Congress should be unanimous in agreeing to any of these proposals, of course there would be no difficulty in carrying a unanimous decision into effect ; but if a majority were one way and a minority, however small, the

other way, that minority, including the party by which a Concession was to be made, is it intended that force should be used, or is the Congress to remain powerless to execute its own decrees ?

‘In the face of all these difficulties, my humble opinion is that no Congress will meet ; and I shall be glad to think that the Emperor will have mended his position at home by making the proposal, while its failure will have saved Europe from some danger and much embarrassment.’<sup>1</sup>

This reasoning may be conclusive, and Napoleon may have had ulterior designs with regard to Rome of a dangerous character, still the fact remains that the Concert of Europe was non-existent, and that if treaty rights were to be maintained it must be by the exertions of individual Powers. With the Polish question fresh in their minds, it was not possible that the Russian Government would be willing to co-operate with England. That unfortunate affair had produced its inevitable results. ‘England,’ exclaimed a Prussian deputy, ‘is always full of consideration for those that can defend themselves.’

‘The tension of the public mind,’ our ambassador reported from Frankfort, ‘is very great, and I am bound to say that there is a wonderful indifference to our representations, while they are at the same time resented as interfering with a cherished project. There is an absolute persuasion that England will not interfere materially, and our counsels regarded as unfriendly have no weight.’<sup>2</sup> The French, too, had learnt the same lesson. When Lord Russell

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Lord Palmerston*, 1846-65, vol. ii. pp. 237-42.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by Lord Salisbury, *op. cit.* pp. 205-6.

proposed 'that England and France should remind Austria, Prussia and the German Diet that any act on their part, tending to weaken the integrity and the independence of Denmark, would be at variance with the treaty of May 8, 1852,' the French Government replied: 'The mode of proceeding suggested by your lordship would be in a great measure analogous to the course pursued by Great Britain and France on the Polish question. He had no inclination (and he frankly avowed that he should so speak to the Emperor) to place France in the same position with reference to Germany as she had been placed with regard to Russia. If France and England were to address such a reminder as that proposed, *they must be prepared to go further.*'<sup>1</sup>

Undeterred by this snub, Lord Russell again made proposals which received from the French Minister the crushing reply: 'That he had not forgotten that when Russia had been warned by France, Great Britain and Austria of the responsibility which she was incurring by her conduct towards Poland, Prince Gortschakoff had replied, "That Russia was ready to assume that responsibility before God and man." He for one did not wish to provoke another answer of the same sort to be received with the same indifference.'<sup>2</sup>

Meanwhile Palmerston wrote to Lord Russell: 'Schleswig is no part of Germany, and its invasion by German troops would be an act of war against Denmark, which would in my clear opinion entitle Denmark to our active military and naval support.'<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 208.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 208-9.

<sup>3</sup> *Life of Lord J. Russell*, vol. ii. p. 388.

And yet, when the Prime Minister could write thus, we are solemnly assured that the Danish expectations of help from England were due entirely to the action of the English press and the unauthorised action of private agents. The truth was that the Cabinet was far from unanimous, and that the warlike proposals of the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary seem to have been overruled by the majority. Times had changed, lamented Palmerston, from the days of Pitt, when mediocrities surrounded a great man. The rise in the intellectual level of the individual members of the Cabinet made it more difficult to secure their adhesion to any policy.

A little rift in the darkness appeared when the various Powers agreed to attend a Conference in London ; but in the circumstances its proceedings were foredoomed to failure.

With regard to French co-operation it seems pretty clear that, if we had taken the lead, they would have followed ; but then the object for which they would be fighting, the securing of the frontier of the Rhine, might not be an object favoured by British statesmen ; so that here there was undoubtedly reason for pause.<sup>1</sup>

Could statesmen have looked into the future, the policy of Great Britain and France might well have appeared to be the nipping in the bud of Prussian pretensions, before they had dangerously developed. But would a war thus undertaken have necessarily met with success ? The Seven Weeks' War was soon to show how strong already was Prussian military

<sup>1</sup> See Lord Cowley's report of conversation with M. Rouher, *Life of Lord J. Russell*, 1846-65, vol. ii. pp. 394-5.

power, and nothing less than the exertion of their whole forces would have enabled France and Great Britain to win. But would a war, undertaken at this time and by the men who then governed, have been able to call forth the whole energies of the country? Assuredly a war conducted, as had been the Crimean, against Prussian efficiency would have shown strange surprises; and most probably a patched-up peace would have completely failed in arresting the development of Prussia. Moreover, there are strong moral objections to a preventive war, such as the most honest among the Germans admit that they undertook in 1914.

On the general question how far we were bound by treaty or by undertaking to assist Denmark, the answer seems to be that, inasmuch as there was no direct guarantee contained in the Treaty of 1852, we were not bound to come to her aid. Neither does there ever seem to have been a direct promise to that effect. But Lord Russell's fussy and interfering diplomacy undoubtedly led to the impression in Denmark that England would intervene by arms on her behalf; so that no average Englishman can look back on the history of the business without shame. Lord Russell's biographer was not too proud to call in aid *Punch's* cartoons when they told in favour of his hero; he carefully refrains from mentioning the famous cartoon which depicted a little boy chalking up impudent remarks and then running away when a big policeman appears in the background. It was, of course, true that we had 'a right to take into consideration the duty, honour and interests of this country, and not to make that duty and that honour and those interests

subordinate to interests of any foreign Power whatever.' But this begged the question how far our previous conduct had really compromised our honour in relation to Denmark.

Upon the whole the judgment of history seems to support the scathing indictment of Disraeli: 'I see that three results have accrued. The first is, that the avowed policy of Her Majesty's Government has failed. The second is, that our just influence in the Councils of Europe has been lowered. Thirdly, in consequence of our just influence in the Councils of Europe being lowered, the securities for peace are diminished. . . . I need not, I think, trouble the House with demonstrating that the Government have failed in their avowed policy of upholding the independence and integrity of Denmark. The first result may be thrown aside. I come, therefore, to the second. By the just influence of England in the Councils of Europe I mean an influence contradistinguished from that which is obtained by intrigue and secret understanding; I mean the influence that results from the conviction of Foreign Powers that our resources are great, and that our policy is moderate and steadfast. Since the settlement that followed the great revolutionary war, England, who obtained at that time—as she deserved to do, for she bore the brunt of the struggle—who obtained at that time all the fair objects of her ambition, has on the whole followed a conservative foreign policy. I do not mean by a conservative foreign policy a policy that would disapprove—still less oppose—the natural development of nations. I mean a foreign policy interested in the tranquillity and

prosperity of the world, the normal condition of which is peace, and which does not ally itself with the revolutionary party of Europe. Other countries have their political systems and public objects, as England had, though they may not have attained them. She is not to look upon them with unreasonable jealousy. The position of England in the Councils of Europe is essentially that of a moderating and mediatory power. Her interest and her policy are, when changes are inevitable and necessary, to assist so that these changes if possible may be accomplished without war, or, if war occurs, that its duration and asperity may be lessened. That is what I mean by the just influence of England in the Councils of Europe. It appears to me that that just influence of England in the Councils of Europe has been lowered. . . . Sir, it does appear to me impossible to deny, under these circumstances, that the just influence of England in the Councils of Europe is lowered. And now I ask what are the consequences. . . . The consequences are—to use a familiar phrase in the Despatches—“most serious,” because in exact proportion as that influence is lowered, the securities for peace are diminished. I lay this down as a great principle, which cannot be controverted, in the management of our foreign affairs. If England is resolved upon a particular policy, war is not probable. If there is, under these circumstances, a cordial alliance between England and France, war is most difficult ; but if there is a thorough understanding between England, France and Russia, war is impossible.’<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Selected Speeches*, vol. ii. pp. 121-2.



(Fortunate orator, who spoke before the days of an all-powerful Germany.)

The peroration was one of Disraeli's finest efforts : ' We will not threaten and then refuse to act. We will not lure on our allies with expectations that we do not fulfil. And, sir, if ever it be the lot of myself or any public man with whom I have the honour to act to carry on important negotiations on behalf of this country . . . I trust that we at least shall not carry them on in such a manner that it will be our duty to come to Parliament to announce to the Country that we have no allies, and then declare that England can never act alone. Sir, those are words which ought never to have escaped the lips of a British Minister. They are sentiments which ought never to have occurred even to his heart. I repudiate, I reject them. I remember there was a time when England, with not a tithe of her present resources, encountered a world in arms. And, Sir, I believe now, if the occasion were fitting, if her independence or her honour were assailed, or her Empire endangered, I believe that England would rise in the magnificence of her might, and struggle triumphantly for those objects for which men live and nations flourish. But I, for one, will never consent to go to war to extricate Ministers from the consequences of their own mistakes.' <sup>1</sup>

Disraeli was a consummate courtier ; and to this may be to some extent due the distinctness with which he made it manifest that he had not been in favour of war with Germany. To Queen Victoria, brooding in the sad isolation of her lonely widowhood,

<sup>1</sup> *Selected Speeches*, vol. ii. pp. 126-7.

every opinion of her husband was naturally treasured as a revelation from on high.<sup>1</sup>

In February, 1864, the Queen wrote to Lord Granville: 'Lord Palmerston and the Emperor Nicholas are the cause of all the present trouble by framing that wretched Treaty of 1852.'<sup>2</sup> Again, in May: 'All this naturally increases the feeling of distrust with which Lord Russell has contrived to inspire her.'<sup>3</sup> But the Prince Consort had assuredly been no blind admirer of Prussia and its methods; and the last letter of the Queen on the Sleswig-Holstein question, printed in Lord Granville's *Life*, runs: 'Her Majesty thinks that it is quite right we should not now mix ourselves up in the question, and that Prussia should at least be made aware of what she and her Government and every honest man in Europe must think of the gross and unblushing violation of every assurance and pledge that she had given, which Prussia has been guilty of.'<sup>4</sup> Apart from this, Queen Victoria was a great Constitutional Monarch; and, had her advisers been agreed as to the necessity of war, she would have acquiesced, however regretfully.

Lord Russell contented himself with issuing a circular which solemnly recorded that 'all rights, old and new, whether founded on the solemn compact of Sovereigns or on the clear expression of the popular will have been set at naught by the conven-

<sup>1</sup> See a singularly striking and pathetic letter to the King of the Belgians, *Letters*, vol. iii. p. 476.

<sup>2</sup> *Life of Lord Granville*, by Lord E. Fitz Maurice, vol. i. p. 459.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 464.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p. 476.

tion of Gasteni ; and the dominion of force is the sole power acknowledged and regarded.' <sup>1</sup>

When the spoilers proceeded to quarrel among themselves, the French and British Governments at first endeavoured, by the proposal of a European Congress, to settle the questions at issue. By a protocol of the Conference of Paris (April 14, 1856), the Plenipotentiaries had solemnly expressed the wish that States between which any serious misunderstandings may arise should, before appealing to arms, have recourse, so far as circumstances might allow, to the good offices of a friendly Power.' <sup>2</sup>

Whatever may have been the inner truth, on the surface Prussia was not averse to such friendly interference from outside. It was Austria that made a European settlement impossible, by excluding from discussion the question of any fresh territorial arrangements, thus stereotyping the *status quo* in Italy, and by transferring to the German Diet the whole subject of the Elbe Duchies.

The holding of a Congress or Conference was accordingly made impossible, but Lord Clarendon placed on record the willingness of the British Government 'at all times . . . to contribute to the utmost of their ability . . . to the readjustment not only of the questions which now divide the litigant States, but of any others which may arise between them in the prosecution of hostilities.' <sup>3</sup>

More drastic methods had, indeed, found advocates. Queen Victoria, who had been the mainstay of the peace party in 1864, was now in favour of

<sup>1</sup> Hertslett, *The Map of Europe by Treaty*, vol. iii. p. 1645.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* vol. ii. pp. 1277-9.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* vol. iii. pp. 1655-85.

intervention against Prussia. 'I send you,' wrote Lord Russell to Lord Clarendon (March 30, 1866), 'a Memorandum written at her desire. It proposes clearly to interfere by force against Prussian designs in the Duchies. Agreeing fully in the iniquity of the war undertaken by Prussia in the pretence of delivering the Duchies from Danish oppression and converted into a forcible appropriation of the Duchies to aggrandise Prussia, I cannot acquiesce in the proposed course.'<sup>1</sup> A little later, however, we find Russell writing (May 17): 'We cannot go to war with<sup>2</sup> Austria, because she defends herself in Venetia; but we can promise her, in case she gives up Venetia for twenty or thirty million sterling, to give her moral, diplomatic, and, if necessary, *material* aid in her quarrel in Sleswig-Holstein.' Austria, he explained, was wrong in Italy, right in Germany.<sup>3</sup>

With the resignation of Lord Russell in 1866, it seemed as though British foreign policy would fall into new channels. Lord Stanley, the Foreign Secretary, in the short-lived Conservative administration (1866-8), was at heart a disciple of the Manchester School; and Mr. Gladstone, who now dominated the Liberal party, had had little sympathy with many of the proceedings of his veteran colleagues, and, except on occasions when his whole nature was deeply stirred, regarded 'peace, retrenchment and reform' as a sufficient 'credo' for civilised men. And yet, what do we

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Lord Clarendon*, vol. ii. p. 311.

<sup>2</sup> *I.e.* Along with.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 312.

find? The community of European interests was so inevitable that statesmen, who would naturally have desired to bask in the sunshine of insular estrangement from continental entanglements, found themselves involved in the bustle of treaty obligations. When Lord Stanley's name was submitted to the Queen as Foreign Secretary, she commented, 'May Lord Stanley not be inclined to go too far in the line of non-intervention?'<sup>1</sup> and subsequent events proved that there was force in the criticism. Lord Stanley, however, was still under the influence of his powerful colleague, who had his own views on questions of foreign policy. Those views were too much tinged with party possessions; but they were none the less genuine. 'Non-intervention might have been successfully opposed to Palmerston,' Disraeli wrote on September 1, 1866, 'but it is impossible for us to gain any popularity in this wise which could not be obtained in a greater degree by Gladstone.' The danger was, lest the Tories should be 'colourless, neither Cobdenite nor imperial; a little more expensive than Gladstone, and not a whit more glorious and national.'<sup>2</sup>

There was, indeed, good reason, had they known it, why British statesmen had every need for special courage and wisdom. In 1866 a secret treaty was discussed between France and Prussia by which, under certain eventualities, in case the emperor of the French should be led by circumstances to cause his troops to enter Belgium or to conquer it, the King of Prussia should 'grant armed aid to France' and 'support her with all his forces, military and

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Disraeli*, vol. iv. p. 443.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 468.

naval, in the face of and against every other Power which should in this eventuality declare war.' <sup>1</sup>

From our point of view it matters nothing whether the perfidy was Napoleon's, or whether, as seems likely, the crafty Bismarck acted as *agent provocateur* to the foolish Frenchman.<sup>2</sup> The result in either case would have been the same, the isolation of England and the settlement of the Belgian question, behind the back, not only of Great Britain, but of the people of Belgium.

Disraeli heard 'from a first-rate quarter' news of the proposal; but Lord Stanley took the easy line of dismissing the whole story as a canard;<sup>3</sup> and told Disraeli in the following April: 'I am ready to go as far as may be necessary in support of Belgium, short of giving an absolute pledge to fight for its independence. Suppose we gave such a pledge, that France and Prussia came to an understanding, Russia and Austria standing aloof, where should we be?' Well may Mr. Buckle comment: 'It was a prudent rather than a generous or even a statesmanlike view. According to general belief we had given such a pledge; in any case, it was the traditional policy of England not to permit the Low Countries to be controlled by a dominant military Power.'<sup>4</sup>

Contrast with Stanley's hesitating language the

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Lord Granville*, vol. ii. pp. 39-40; *Life of Lord Lyons*, by Lord Newton, pop. ed., pp. 214-5.

<sup>2</sup> In November, 1867, the Queen of Holland wrote to Lord Clarendon that Louis Napoleon had told her that Bismarck had invited him to take Belgium (*Life of Lord Clarendon*, vol. ii. p. 339).

<sup>3</sup> *Life of Disraeli*, vol. iv. p. 469.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p. 471.

firm line taken by Queen Victoria. 'Prussia,' General Charles Grey wrote on her behalf, in July, 1867, 'isn't likely to violate either the neutrality of Luxemburg or the independence of Belgium—indeed she has no interest to do so—*unless she sees reason to believe that England means her guarantee of both these objects to remain a dead letter ; in which case she might think it to her interest to come to an agreement with France fatal to the independence of the rest of Europe.* . . . The Queen is confirmed in her opinion of the expediency of our acting firmly on a well-defined and well-understood principle of foreign policy by the result of our intervention on the Luxemburg question. It is not only that peace was preserved chiefly by our means, but that our action on that question went far towards restoring to England the prestige there can be no doubt she had lost. It is neither for our national credit nor for the interest of the world that we should again fall into the state of absolute disregard from which we have now partially recovered. H.M. will, therefore, strongly urge the necessity of your giving your best attention to our whole system of foreign policy, so as to secure to England the respect and influence due to her as the Power who, above all others, can have no ambitious views of her own, nor any interest but in the preservation of peace.' <sup>1</sup>

The facts with regard to the Luxemburg question were as follows. Luxemburg had been a member of the Germanic Confederation, but its Grand Duke was the King of Holland, from whose Dutch dominions it was altogether separated. With the

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Disraeli*, vol. iv. p. 473.

dissolution of the Germanic Confederation, after the defeat of Austria by Prussia, the status of Luxemburg was in doubt. It was garrisoned by Prussian troops, and these seemed a menace to France. Napoleon III. opened negotiations for the sale by Holland of the Grand Duchy to France; Prussia naturally resented this course; and for a time war seemed imminent. 'As the Grand-Duchy had been guaranteed to the King of Holland by a Treaty, in 1839, to which Great Britain with the other Great Powers was a party, this country was directly interested; and the Queen's personal intervention and Stanley's urgent efforts prevailed to make both sides reasonable.' <sup>1</sup>

With regard to Luxemburg, Stanley rightly saw that its neutralisation was 'the one indispensable condition of peace'; but he was very reluctant to give the guarantee which would alone make neutralisation effective. The Queen could not understand this hesitation. 'We are already parties to the guarantee of Belgian neutrality and independence,' wrote General Grey on her behalf to Disraeli on May 5, 'and to extend the guarantee of neutrality to Luxemburg does not seem to entail upon us any great additional responsibility.' Her Majesty's arguments, which Disraeli reinforced, prevailed; and at a conference in London in May a treaty was signed by which the Duchy was neutralised, under the guarantee of the Powers, and the Prussian garrison withdrawn. Stanley was very insistent in the House of Commons that the guarantee was a collective and not a separate one; that the liability was limited,

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 470.



and amounted rather to a moral sanction than to a contingent liability to go to war. Derby laboured the same point in the House of Lords. Under a collective guarantee, he said, if there was a difference of opinion among the guarantors, no one party was called upon to take the duty of enforcing it. Both statesmen had in view the contingency which Stanley had discussed in writing to Disraeli, of France and Prussia combining to violate the treaty. But their language was unfortunate. The real point was : would England assist France or Prussia to support the neutrality of Luxemburg if the others proceeded to violate it ? As the Queen and Disraeli understood the treaty, the answer was, yes.' <sup>1</sup>

The best that Disraeli could say for Stanley was that, 'although . . . of a reserved and rather morose temper . . . he is really *au fond* truthful and impartial; and if convinced that he has erred or miscalculated is never blind to the result, and, often unavowedly, and to a certain degree perhaps unconsciously, will assuredly modify his conduct. So, in the present state of affairs, it is far from improbable that Lord Stanley will ultimately be the Minister who will destroy, and shatter to pieces, the decaying theory and system of non-interference.' <sup>2</sup> The wish was doubtless father to the thought ; otherwise the prophecy must be dismissed as singularly unfortunate.

Upon the defeat of Disraeli's Government in 1868, Lord Clarendon became Foreign Secretary in Gladstone's Ministry. He was, according to Mr. Glad-

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Disraeli*, vol. iv. pp. 471-2.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 473-4.

stone, 'the only living British statesman whose name carried any influence in the Councils of Europe. Only eighteen or twenty months remained to him ; they were spent in useful activity.'<sup>1</sup> Lord Morley prints a very interesting letter of Mr. Gladstone to General Grey, which expresses his considered views on the general subject of foreign policy.

'I do not believe that England ever will or can be unfaithful to her great tradition, or can forswear her interest in the common transactions and the general interests of Europe. But her credit and her power form a fund, which, in order that they may be made the most of, should be thriftily used.

'The effect of the great revolutionary war was to place England in a position to rely upon the aid of her own resources. This was no matter of blame to either party ; it was the result of a desperate struggle of over twenty years, in which every one else was down in his turn, but England was ever on her feet ; in which it was found that there was no ascertained limit either to her means or to her disposition to dispense them ; in which, to use the language of Mr. Canning, her flag was always flying "a signal of rallying to the combatant, and of shelter to the fallen." The habit of appeal and of reliance, thus engendered by peculiar circumstances, requires to be altered by a quiet and substantial, though not a violent, process. For though Europe never saw England faint away, *we* know at what a cost of internal danger to all the institutions of the country she fought her way to the perilous eminence on which she undoubtedly stood in 1815.

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Gladstone*, vol. i. pp. 888-9.

‘ If there is a fear abroad that England has forever abjured a resort to force other than moral force, is that fear justified by facts ? In 1853, joining with France, we made ourselves the vindicators of the peace of Europe ; and ten years later, be it remembered, in the case of Denmark, we offered to perform the same office, but we could get no one to join us. Is it desirable that we should go further ? Is England so uplifted in strength above every other nation that she can with prudence advertise herself as ready to undertake the general redress of wrongs ? Would not the consequences of such professions and promises be either the premature exhaustion of her means, or a collapse in the day of performance ? Is *any* Power at this time of day warranted in assuring this comprehensive obligation ? Of course the answer is, no. But do not, on the other hand, allow it to be believed that England will never interfere. For the eccentricities of other men’s belief no one can answer ; but for any reasonable belief in such an abnegation on the part of England, there is no ground whatever. As I understand Lord Clarendon’s ideas . . . they proceed upon such grounds as these : That England should keep entire in her own hands the means of estimating her own obligations upon the various states of facts as they arise ; that she should not foreclose and narrow her own liberty of choice by declarations made to other Powers, in their own or supposed interests, of which they would claim to be at least joint interpreters ; that it is dangerous for her to assume alone an advanced, and therefore an isolated, position in regard to European controversies ; that, come what

may, it is better for her to promise too little than too much ; that she should not encourage the weak by giving expectations of aid to resist the strong, but should rather seek to deter the strong, by firm but moderate language, from aggressions on the weak ; that she should seek to develop and mature the action of a common, or public, or European opinion, as the best standing bulwark against wrong, but should beware of seeming to lay down the law of that opinion by her own authority, and thus running the risk of setting against her, and against right and justice, that general sentiment which ought to be, and generally would be, arrayed in their favour. I am persuaded that at this juncture opinions of this colour, being true and sound, are also the only opinions which the country is disposed to approve. But I do not believe that on that account it is one whit less disposed than it has been at any time to cast in its lot upon any fitting occasion with the cause it believes to be right.' <sup>1</sup>

The statement of general principles is comparatively easy ; the difficulty lies in their application, and the moment was soon to come when the Government's capacity for courage and statesmanship would be severely tested. In 1869 the purchase by a French Company of the Luxemburg Railway again raised the alarm of French designs upon Belgium. The King of the Belgians was seriously perturbed ; and General Grey wrote for Queen Victoria to Lord Clarendon that she had 'invariably expressed the strongest opinion that England was bound, not only by the obligations of treaties, but by interests of

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 951-2.

vital importance to herself, to maintain the integrity and independence as well as the neutrality of Belgium; and that the best security for these essential objects would be found in the knowledge that any proceedings which seemed to threaten their violation would bring England at once into the field.' <sup>1</sup>

Mr. Gladstone soon after informed the French Government that 'the independence of Belgium was an object of the first interest to the mind of the British people'; and 'that the suspicion even of an intention on the part of France to pay less respect to the independence of Belgium than to the independence of England would at once produce a t  mper in the country which would put an end to the good understanding and useful and harmonious co-operation of the two governments.' <sup>2</sup>

'Bismarck,' wrote Lord Clarendon, 'is biding his time quietly. If France annexes Belgium and we take no part he will be delighted, as France could no longer complain of Prussian aggrandisement. If we do take a part, he would be equally delighted at the rupture between England and France, and would come to our assistance. Either way he thinks Prussia would gain.' <sup>3</sup>

In fact it would seem that Napoleon III.'s real designs were not otherwise than peaceful; but he was playing a dangerous game. A man broken in health, though making a brave show, he was surrounded by schemers and intriguers; and there was the fatal need of maintaining the Napoleonic legend, by paper, if not by blood and treasure.

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Lord Lyons*, p. 148.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 148-9.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 151.

What was the true temper of the French Government was shown by an episode which has obtained little notice.

A proceeding by Lord Clarendon in the beginning of 1870, whether wise or unwise, at least proved that selfish isolation was not the attitude of British Ministers. Without consulting his colleagues, except Mr. Gladstone, Lord Clarendon, at the request of the French Government, urged Bismarck to agree to a simultaneous measure of disarmament along with France. The proposal naturally met with complete failure, and Lord Clarendon might as well have appealed to the advancing tide to retire. Bismarck pertinently asked what British statesmen would say, were they asked to limit their fleet? and a few months were to throw a grim light on what Lord Clarendon considered 'unnecessary' forces.

It is curious that, neither in Bismarck's *Reminiscences* nor in Busch's calculated indiscretions, is there any allusion to this proposal. The explanation may be that, with all his faults, Bismarck was human; and, when he met with respect and appreciation, genuinely reciprocated those feelings. Thus, though, as a politician, he may sometimes have hoodwinked Lord Odo Russell, as a man he gave him his cordial friendship. In spite of his brutal ways, he was himself very sensitive; and what especially grated on him was the ignorant superciliousness of lesser men.<sup>1</sup>

In 1870 the acceptance by a prince of the Hohen-

<sup>1</sup> Lord Stanley, when Foreign Secretary, on one occasion spelt Bismarck's name 'Bismark.' *Ibid.* p. 113. On the secret proposals for disarmament, see *Ibid.* pp. 169-96

zollern family of the throne of Spain was resented by the French as an outrage. The candidature was, however, withdrawn; and had Napoleon III. followed the road of safety, he would have consigned as quickly as possible to oblivion so dangerous a subject. Instead, claims were put forward calculated to wound Prussia's susceptibilities. Bismarck, who held that the time had come for the assertion by Germany of her proper place in the European system, saw his opportunity; and, by tampering with a telegram received from the King, made the outbreak of war inevitable.<sup>1</sup>

To this extent Bismarck may be called the author of the war; though the weakness of Napoleon III. and the bluster of his Ministers gave him his opportunity. History presents few sadder spectacles than the last months of Napoleon's rule. A man broken in health and vigour, this restless schemer entered upon war without an ally.<sup>2</sup> The nephew of the great Napoleon waged war with soldiers, the soles of whose boots were of paper, and whose armament was altogether inferior to that of the Prussians. In this state of things there could only be one issue. No individual general may have been a traitor; but there was a real truth behind the vague complaints

<sup>1</sup> *Bismarck, Reflections and Reminiscences of*, Engl. trans., vol. ii. p. 96, note, and p. 99.

<sup>2</sup> This was, however, perhaps not due to any fault of Napoleon III. There seems good ground for the view that Austria had entered into undertakings which she failed to fulfil. Beust wrote on July 20, 1870, 'Faithful to our engagements as laid down in the letters exchanged last year between our Emperors, we consider the cause of France our own, and will as far as possible contribute to the success of her arms.' (*The Present Position of European Politics* (1887), by Sir C. Dilke, pp. 241 and 366-7.)

that France had been betrayed. What individual valour or *élan* could effect was done ; and, when her regular armies were put out of action, France maintained for some time a heroic, if unprofitable, resistance. Bismarck and the Prussians mistook for permanent national decadence the temporary and accidental dry-rot of a vicious system ; and the German General Staff, by insisting on the cession of Alsace and Lorraine, secured that in any future grouping of the European Powers, France and Germany should always remain in permanent opposition.

These things, however, belonged to a later date. When the war was threatening, the immediate danger zone was, from the point of view of Great Britain, the position of Belgium. In order to inflame European, and especially British, public opinion against France, Bismarck published to the world, through the medium of the *Times* Paris correspondent, the text of the proposed treaty regarding Belgium mentioned above. In this difficult position of affairs Lord Granville acted with promptitude and judgment. Instead of wasting time in useless complaint, he at once availed himself of the opportunity offered by the anxiety of both parties to exclaim, 'Thou canst not say I did it.'

'As each party,' writes Lord Fitz Maurice, 'was trying to throw the responsibility of the draft treaty on the other, both thereby placed themselves in the position of having to show the most extreme eagerness to accept the invitation which Lord Granville at once addressed to them to join in a treaty which, while maintaining all the guarantees of 1839 in



regard to Belgium, gave a new and special guarantee to her territorial integrity. Separate treaties to that effect were accordingly signed on August 9, 1870, between her Majesty on the one side and the King of Prussia and the Emperor of the French on the other, to continue during the war and for twelve months afterwards. At a slightly later date, an analogous arrangement was made in regard to Luxemburg.' <sup>1</sup>

'The publication of the treaty,' wrote Gladstone to Bright, 'has thrown upon us the necessity either of doing something fresh to secure Belgium, or else of saying that under no circumstances would we take any steps to secure her from absorption. This publication has wholly altered the feeling of the House of Commons, and no Government could at this moment venture to give utterance to such an intention about Belgium. But neither do we think it would be right, even if it were safe, to announce that we would in any case sit by with folded arms, and see actions done which would amount to a total extinction of public right in Europe.' <sup>2</sup>

In reply to remonstrances from Bright, whose individualist creed naturally recoiled from the vindication of European rights, Gladstone wrote: 'You will, I am sure, give me credit for good faith when I say, especially on Lord Granville's part as on my own, who are most of all responsible, that we take this step in the interest of peace. . . . The recommendation sent up in opposition to it generally is, that we should simply declare *we* will defend the neutrality of Belgium by arms, in case it should be

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Lord Granville*, vol. ii. pp. 41-2.

<sup>2</sup> *Life of Gladstone*, vol. i. p. 975.

attacked. Now the sole or single-handed defence of Belgium would be an enterprise which we incline to think quixotic ; if these two great military Powers combined against it—that combination is the only serious danger ; and this it is which by our proposed engagements we should, I hope, render improbable to the very last degree. I add, for myself, this confession of faith. If the Belgian people desire, on their own account, to join France or any other country, I for one will be no party to taking up arms to prevent it. But that the Belgians, whether they would or not, should go “ plump ” down the maw of another country, to satisfy dynastic greed, is another matter. The accomplishment of such a crime as this implies would come to an extinction of public right in Europe, and I do not think we could look on while the sacrifice of freedom and independence was in course of consummation.’<sup>1</sup>

Both Germany and France bitterly complained of the action of England during the war. What each really seemed to expect was that British neutrality should be ‘ benevolent,’ where their interests were concerned,—a contradiction in terms, unknown to international law. Bismarck pretended to believe that England should have prevented the war, by bringing pressure upon France, and France considered that, by attempting to circumscribe the area of hostilities, England had shown herself hostile. In fact, there was no reason why England should have played the decoy duck to Bismarck ; and if France was left without allies, the reason lay elsewhere than in the suggestions of British Ministers.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 976.

Few at this time of day will be found to agree with Morier, who held that England had covered herself with disgrace by not announcing to Napoleon that, in case he went to war, he would have against him England as well as Germany. Apart from the morality of such a course which is very doubtful, it may be urged that, on the ground of expediency, such interference, even if it had met with immediate success, would ultimately have precipitated the Belgian question, and brought about that 'deal' between France and Bismarck which haunted the thoughts of the more prescient British statesmen.

'We pressed as strongly as possible upon the Emperor,' wrote Lord Granville (in 1880), 'that he had no cause for war with Germany. When he declared it, we announced our neutrality with the full consent of Parliament and the country. The French now complain, as they did then, naturally but not reasonably, that we did not come to their help when they were down. They say we did not even interfere to prevent the bombardment of Paris. We did indirectly try to prevent it; but how could we have officially insisted, without a total abandonment of our neutrality, that the victorious Germans were not to do so, when the French Government declared their irrevocable decision not to yield a stone of a fortress or an inch of territory?

'When peace was made, we remonstrated on the enormous indemnity claimed by the Germans. After we had done so, that indemnity was considerably reduced. We cannot say whether it was done in consequence of our remonstrances or not, or merely

after them, but the French Ambassador thanked us for the service we rendered.

‘The great complaint of the French is that we circumscribed the war. This was no injury to France ; for, if Austria had joined her, Russia would have joined Germany, and the conflagration would have been general. In any case this was no proof of our inactivity and indifference.’<sup>1</sup>

There was some difference of opinion between Granville and Gladstone on the question whether the British Government should declare their views on the conditions of peace.<sup>2</sup> Gladstone and Goschen were in favour of doing so ; Granville was on the other side, and carried the day. His objection was, that it was impossible to do so ‘without being considered to throw our weight into the French side against Germany, with consequent encouragement on one side or on the other. Palmerston wasted the strength derived by England from the great war by his brag. I am afraid of our wasting that which we at present derive from moral causes, by laying down general principles when nobody will attend to them, and when in all probability they will be disregarded.’<sup>3</sup> Given the character of Bismarck, nothing is more certain that moral lectures might have done harm and could not possibly have done any good.

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Lord Granville*, vol. ii. p. 70.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 62.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 63.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE NEW EUROPE AND ITS PROBLEMS. 1871-1900

HOWEVER successfully the immediate pitfalls may have been avoided, the result of the Franco-German War embarked Europe upon an unknown sea, where the old bearings could no longer help. 'There is no longer a Europe,' Count Beust is reported to have said ; and in any case, instead of a Europe wherein Prussia was the humble jackal of Russia or of Austria, a new Europe had evolved, wherein Germany would claim a pre-eminent position. Unfortunately the German problem had been always ignored or misunderstood by British statesmen. Whereas Italian unity had appealed to the hearts and sympathies of most generous Englishmen, the idea of a united Germany left the English practical man or theorist singularly cold.

In 1860, at the request of Lord John Russell, the Prince Consort wrote a Memorandum on the general German situation. It is unnecessary to enter here into the details of his diagnosis, because the course of the subsequent history ran in another direction. But his remarks regarding Prussia and English views with regard to her are still of interest. 'Austria and Prussia, as European Powers, were admitted as two

out of the five great arbiters of Europe, and are by implication supposed to represent the interests of Germany when those are affected. The minor States, dreading the moral and national (German) power of Prussia, have transferred their old allegiance from Napoleon to Austria, in the assurance that she has the same interest which he had to maintain their quasi-independence, and keep Germany divided. . . .

‘The Austrian policy is still identically the same which it was in the time of the Holy Roman Empire ; caring nothing for Germany, but much for her influence over it which she exercises through the minor States, and the priests who are hostile to political and religious progress of any kind. . . .

‘The dissatisfaction of the German nation at the fact of its internal development being stunted, but, above all, at being reduced to a non-entity in Europe, and, more than that, at being at the mercy of the other European nations, and particularly of her natural enemy, France,—is the main feeling which caused the Revolution of 1848, and is even now working deeply in the public mind. The events of the last year have shown how helpless Germany is in its divided state, and how broken down is the power of Austria. As the minor States and the national feeling throughout Germany were ready and demanded to support Austria in her late struggle with France, and even to sacrifice themselves for her, and were only prevented from doing so by the opposition of Prussia,—increased hatred towards her, whom they make responsible for their present helplessness and danger, is the immediate and natural consequence. As Austria is at the same time no longer

able to protect them, their natural tendencies must drive them towards France. . . . If Prussia chose to act the perfidious part towards the other States of Germany, which Sardinia has just acted towards her neighbours, she could in a short time, by pretending to be the violent advocate of an advanced Liberal policy, by undermining in their own States the different small Governments, which are not free from many sins, and by conspiring against them with the Radical party, bring about at the same time their destruction by revolution and the union of those States under her own sceptre. The Prussian royal family, however, is too timid to play so bold a game, too honourable to play so false an one. No one can object to the latter consideration, and with regard to the former it must be borne in mind that Prussia has no chance of finding an ally like the one who did the work of Sardinia, and would probably have France, Russia and Austria fighting against her, and even England hostile.

‘Where Prussia is to blame, however, is that she, from whom alone salvation can come for Germany, has no fixed view as to how the task is to be accomplished. According to my notion, she was in the right track when she established the Zollverein. Without interfering with the Federal Constitution, and the external form of Germany, which is recognised by Europe, she ought to proceed by treaties with the separate States, to effect that union which otherwise is impossible without a convulsion, and in which treaties the minor States would find security for their non-absorption in Prussia. . . . But if Prussia is to act upon that line, she must act without any refer-

ence to Austria, who will impede her in every way in her power. Being in her perfect right, she need not quarrel with Austria, whom her policy does not attack; but no worse advice could in my opinion be given by us to Prussia than that she should make up to Austria. . . . Should Germany be attacked, all that can be hoped for from Austria . . . is that she will furnish her contingent to the federal army. But this she is bound to do by the federal Act, and could hardly dare to refuse because of a dislike to the German policy pursued by Prussia. Nothing, therefore, can be gained by truckling to her.

‘Foreign Powers, and England in particular, can do little good by advice. We ought, therefore, in my opinion, to confine ourselves to inculcating confidence in Prussia at the minor courts, showing that from her alone can be expected efficient support and protection, and that the efficacy of that support will be in proportion to their adherence to her. Of this our diplomatic agents do everywhere *diametrically and systematically the reverse*.’<sup>1</sup> At a somewhat later date Morier, who had for years made a special study of the Germanic question, recognised, in spite of his dislike of Bismarck and of his methods, that only by means of Prussia could the goal be reached of a united Germany, and that, from such a Germany, Austria must be carefully excluded. Morier was seriously alarmed at the indifference shown in England to the subject of German unity. ‘Why can England find sympathy for the wars of oppressed Venetians and Lombards, and none for oppressed Germans? Why is it a noble sentiment to feel

<sup>1</sup> *Life of the Prince Consort*, vol. v. pp. 65-9.



the touch of kith and kin on the Po, and mere dreaming sentimentality to feel the same on the Eider? '1 Three years before he had written (1860) to Lord J. Russell: 'He (the Grand Duke of Baden) had derived the most indescribable pleasure from . . . discovering that you did not seem to share the general contempt for everything German which is universally in Germany ascribed to English statesmen.' 2

In this state of things the melancholy fact was that, when the unity of Germany was accomplished by blood and iron, there were no grateful associations linking the evolution of Germany with the kindly words and generous acts of English sympathisers. In truth, Germany was absorbed in Prussia; and the new Power came into being in so questionable a shape that men instinctively realised that the forces of reaction in Europe had received a new mainstay.

The bursting of the European floodgates in 1870-1 had its first outcome in the repudiation by Russia of the clause in the Treaty of Paris, 1856, by which she, as well as Turkey, was restrained from maintaining ships of war in the Black Sea. Many British statesmen recognised that such a provision could not be permanently maintained; nevertheless, the cynical manner in which Russia acted, without consultation with the other parties to the treaty, boded ill for the future sanctity of European obligation. Though Bismarck may not have been privy to the Russian intentions, it was well understood that German acquiescence in the step was the *quid pro quo* for

<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs of Sir R. Morier*, p. 372.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 243-4.

Russia's neutrality in the Franco-German War. Moreover, in accordance with his favourite principle *divide ut imperes*, Bismarck welcomed anything that tended to keep asunder the different European Powers.

In this difficult situation Lord Granville took the wisest measure possible. The British Ambassador at Berlin, Lord Augustus Loftus, was without influence. Mr. Odo Russell was, therefore, despatched on a special mission to the German headquarters in France. Bismarck could recognise a man when he met him, and was not a little attracted by Mr. Odo Russell's firmness and plain speaking. He was probably honest in declaring that 'the natural allies of Germany were England and Austria.' Accordingly, whilst resolutely refusing to allow Prussia to become a party to the tripartite treaty, he made the suggestion that a Conference on the Black Sea question should be held at St. Petersburg.

'In the negotiations which followed, and ultimately led to the assembling of the Conference in London, in January, 1871, Lord Granville in the first place refused to recognise the separate position of Russia in the matter, and obtained a practical retractation of the Circular by an express recognition of the doctrine by all the Powers represented, including Russia, that no European treaty can be modified or declared to be no longer binding by the action of one of the parties to it alone. . . . Russia, along with the other Powers signed a recognition, "that it is an essential principle of the law of nations, that no Power can liberate itself from the engagement of a treaty, nor modify the stipulations thereof, unless

with the consent of the contracting Powers, by means of an amicable arrangement.”’<sup>1</sup> Moreover, while the provisions of the treaty affecting the Black Sea were abrogated, the new treaty contained an article maintaining the principle of the closing of the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus, established by the separate convention of March 30, 1856, with an additional power expressly given to the Sultan, ‘to open the said straits in time of peace to the vessels of war of friendly and allied Powers, in case the sublime Porte should judge it necessary, in order to secure the execution of the stipulations of the Treaty of Paris of March 30, 1856.’<sup>2</sup>

In fact, by no fault of its own, the result of the Franco-Prussian War produced a situation of no little difficulty for the British Government. That war ‘had alienated both the late belligerents from Great Britain, and the constant ill-will of Russia . . . had to be reckoned with. The Czar, so Lord Odo Russell informed Lord Granville, when on a visit to Berlin, had said that he had made a special study of the institutions and policy of Great Britain, and that he had convinced himself of the danger to which European government would be exposed by following her “downward course.” The Czar also felt it his duty to utter a warning note to the Royal Family of Germany because “the sacred cause of Royalty must suffer from any imitation of the pernicious example given by the growing republicanism and socialism of England. Germany, Austria and Russia should hold together to resist those dangerous and evil influences of England, if

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Lord Granville*, vol. ii. pp. 73-6.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 76.

order was to be maintained in Europe." ' ' <sup>1</sup> It is certain that Bismarck did not spare his colours in retailing these confidences to Lord Odo. Nevertheless, the possible reappearance of the Holy Alliance, in a more menacing and militant shape, was a sinister portent in the European sky ; nor was, in the circumstances, the entrance of Italy into an informal alliance (1873) with the German Powers a cause for congratulation.

Added to all this, there was the danger, as has been seen in the opening chapter, that Germany should intervene to crush France before she had recovered from the late war. The action of Queen Victoria in appealing to the better nature of the German Emperor to prevent such a war, in 1874, and to the Czar, in 1875, tactful and, indeed, necessary as it was, was not of a nature to endear the Queen or her subjects to Bismarck or his followers. Bismarck himself protested vigorously to the end of his life that there was no cause for such suspicions ; and that the scare in 1875, which enabled Russia to appear in the rôle of an Olympian deity, deciding the destinies of nations, had its origin in the vanity of Prince Gortschakoff.<sup>2</sup>

However this may have been, the fact remained that in the new Europe which had emerged from the Franco-Prussian War, the road to permanent peace was even more insecure than it had been when France was the danger spot. Granted that we accept the view, for which much may be said, that

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 110-11.

<sup>2</sup> *Bismarck, Reflections of*, vol. ii, pp. 186-9. But see authorities on p. 18.

Germany, through the mouth of her great Minister, was honestly desirous of peace, having obtained all that she desired and requiring time to consolidate her gains, still that Minister was haunted by the fear of possible combinations against Germany ; and, to prevent such combinations. might encourage measures detrimental to the interests of other Powers. The Belgian Minister at Berlin was under the impression that, in the event of war, Bismarck intended to occupy Belgium.<sup>1</sup> Upon the whole, after mature reflection, Bismarck was inclined to prefer a close alliance with Austria rather than one with Russia. At the same time, he recognised in Russia a most dangerous possible enemy to Germany ; and, therefore, considered it to be the interest of Germany that Russia's energies should be diverted to directions where no German issue was at stake. He believed that, 'as regards Austria and Germany, Russia would be less dangerous so long as it remained in Constantinople.'<sup>2</sup> Considering the traditional policy of England respecting Turkey, it is obvious how great a danger this attitude involved to British interests. Not only was an Anglo-German *entente* out of the question with regard to the affairs of the near East, but it might even be to the interest of Germany that Russia and Great Britain should fall out over this question.

In 1874 there occurred a change of Ministry in England, and the new Prime Minister, who, physically and, perhaps to some extent, intellectually, was hardly the Hector of the past, when at length he

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Lord Lyons*, p. 333.

<sup>2</sup> *Bismarck, Reflections of*, vol. ii. p. 280.

acquired power as well as office, might reasonably hold that British public opinion had moved in the direction of a more imperialist and vigorous foreign policy.

It is true that in 1866 Disraeli had spoken of England as having 'outgrown the European continent.' 'Her position,' he said, 'is no longer that of a mere European Power. England is the metropolis of a great maritime Empire, extending to the boundaries of the furthest ocean. . . . She is as ready, and as willing even, to interfere as in the old days when the necessity of her position requires it. There is no Power, indeed, which interferes more than England. She interferes in Asia, because she is really more of an Asiatic than an European Power.'<sup>1</sup> But Disraeli was himself to recognise that you cannot divide the affairs of continents into water-tight compartments, and if the key of India was London, India might equally be lost or retained on some European battlefield. In any case the Disraeli of 1874 struck a somewhat different note from the Disraeli of 1866.

What were the views on British foreign policy of a singularly thoughtful and able man who had the best opportunities of seeing the inner working of the European system may be gathered from the letters of Morier. 'It is the curse,' he wrote to Jowett (January 21, 1873), 'of living in an island that foreign politics take hold of our imagination in the dreamy sort of way that all things were taken cognisance of by the Laputans. If a magician would for a minute or two lend me his wand, I would dry up the waters

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *The Political History of England (1837-1901)* by S. Low and L. C. Sanders, pp. 210-11.

of the Channel, with a great portion of the North Sea and the Atlantic, and I would give England a land frontier towards France, Belgium, Holland, Germany and America. We should then be forced to shake ourselves out of dreamland, and the necessities that would then press on us would, I believe, shape us into the grandest nation the world ever saw, because every day convinces me that the raw material, both moral and physical, of the Englishman is enormously superior to that of any other existing nation. We are the only truthful people in the world, the only people who are able to produce a gentleman, as an ethical being, raised in virtue of the general climatic conditions of society, and not the product of a caste, the only people who are not petty and pettifogging in their international dealings, and the only people who, with great self-assertion and a bull-dog kind of courage, have yet a singular amount of gentleness and tenderness. But living as we do in Laputa, with three-quarters of our real estate not situated in Laputa but down below in *terra firma*, we are in a hopelessly false position, which will most undoubtedly end by taking us to the dogs. . . . You might as well expect an ox to reproduce his species and lord it over a herd of bulls as a nation to maintain an imperial position which cultivates the virtue of resignation. England *can* maintain her empire, if she *wills* to do it, but unless she will it with all her heart and soul she will find it difficult to keep even the Isle of Wight. This strange spectacle is now being presented to the world, that at the moment when our planet is for practical purposes . . . shrinking to the proportions of a middle-sized

mediaeval state . . . and when the most distant nations are thereby being brought into a closer contact than were formerly the inhabitants of distant countries, England, which is equipresent in Europe, Asia, Africa and America, and omnipresent in Australia, which has more neighbours and a larger land boundary than any nation ever had before, has convinced herself that she lives alone in a little island whose parochial concerns are all in all to her, and turns away with contempt and disgust from the affairs of a world in which she has ten times the stake of any other nation.' <sup>1</sup>

Again, a little later Morier wrote: 'There are things which appear to me infinitely worse than war, worse than an unsuccessful war even. And as one of these very much worse things I consider the national habit of looking at war as the *summum malum* as the very worst. Unless a nation in its collective capacity retains the power of feeling that death and ruin are preferable a hundred fold than life and prosperity under certain conditions, unless in a word it can, *le cas échéant*, be moved by the feeling so splendidly described in the conversation between old Talbot and young John in *Henry IV.*, it is lost, hopelessly lost. Now, the way in which the Alabama negotiation (the negotiation, mind you, not the principle of indemnity) and the Black Sea negotiation were carried on and were acquiesced in, and even boasted of by the Liberal party in England, goes far to prove that England has got into this stage of national decrepitude, and I would consider the worst war preferable to this.' <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs of Sir R. Morier*, vol. ii. pp. 276-7.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 293.



Holding these views, Morier, though a strong Free Trader and maintaining Liberal views on many questions, was delighted when the general election of 1874 gave the Conservatives the opportunity of showing that they were less parochial in their politics than had been their opponents.

'The frequent allusions to foreign politics,' he wrote on April 1, 1874, 'made in his electioneering speeches by Mr. Disraeli, the cheers with which they were received, above all, the golden definition with which the present Premier has once for all rescued the Queen's foreign affairs from the limbo to which they had been consigned by the shop-keeping class of English politicians, when he described them as England's *home* affairs in *foreign* parts, have induced the belief that the accession of H.M.'s present Ministers will go far to restore the desired equilibrium between the forces of war and the forces of peace.'<sup>1</sup>

The purchase of the Khedive's shares in the Suez Canal Company (1875) was the first fruits of the new imperialism. When, therefore, in 1876, disturbances broke out in the Turkish empire, which were repressed ruthlessly, any shrewd observer must have recognised that it was highly probable that the conflagration would spread. In this state of things, Disraeli assumed a serious responsibility in refusing his assent to the Berlin Memorandum of May, 1876, the object of which was to impose certain reforms on Turkey, to be carried out under European supervision. If the end to be aimed at was the prevention of Russian predominance in the East, surely the safest means of securing this was to cling, so long

<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs of Sir R. Morier*, vol. ii. pp. 331-2.

as possible, to the not very sea-worthy craft of the concert of Europe. The Berlin Memorandum in its origin was the work of the three Empires ; but France and Italy adhered to it ; and doubtless Great Britain, by refusing, helped to stiffen the backs of the Turks and thus to make more probable the outbreak of war.

The British refusal had the further effect of arousing to fever heat the indignation of Gladstone. 'From that time forward (1876), till the final consummation in 1879-80, I made the Eastern question the main business of my life,' wrote Mr. Gladstone in a fragment of reminiscences. In a private letter he described the Government's foreign policy as 'the most selfish and least worthy I have ever known.'<sup>1</sup> 'I am entirely in harmony with you,' he wrote to the Duke of Argyll, 'as to your view of the Eastern policy. It has been depressing and corrupting to the country ; a healthier air has been generated by indignation at the Bulgarian massacres, which has thrown us back on our rather forgotten humanity.'<sup>2</sup> 'I had a long talk,' he wrote to his wife in September, 'with Delane (the editor of the *Times*). We, he and I, are much of one mind in thinking the Turks must go out of Bulgaria, though retaining a titular supremacy if they like. Between ourselves, Granville a little hangs back from this.'<sup>3</sup>

The situation was further complicated because Gladstone had in 1874 retired from the leadership of the Liberal party ; and he was now informally holding the reins, whilst the nominal leaders, Lord

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Gladstone*, vol. ii. p. 158.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 160.

Hartington and Lord Granville, were placed in an altogether false position.

In his famous pamphlet on the Bulgarian atrocities, Gladstone wrote: 'But I return to, and end with that which is the omega, as well as the alpha, of this great and most mournful case. As an old servant of the Crown and State, I entreat my countrymen, upon whom far more than perhaps any other people of Europe it depends, to require and to insist that our Government, which has been working in one direction, shall work in the other, and shall apply all its vigour to concur with the other States of Europe in obtaining the extinction of the Turkish executive power in Bulgaria. Let the Turks now carry away their abuses in the only possible manner, viz. by carrying off themselves . . . one and all, bag and baggage, shall, I hope, clear out from the province they have desolated and profaned?'<sup>1</sup>

In December, 1876, at the suggestion of Great Britain, a conference of the great Powers was held at Constantinople. It ended in failure, because Turkey rejected the demands of the Powers; but Gladstone recognised that it had been of some use, because it had re-established the European concert, and extricated Great Britain 'from a disgraceful position of virtual complicity with Turkey.'<sup>2</sup> In truth, suspicion was everywhere ripe. 'I am amused,' wrote Lord Derby to Lord Odo Russell, 'by your description of the Russo-German suspicions entertained against us; these fellows make us act as they would act in our place. They can neither deal straightforwardly themselves nor give anybody else credit

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Gladstone*, vol. ii, pp. 161-2.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 168.

for doing so.' In 1877 an organ of the reptile press, intended to further Bismarck's interests, quoted from an Austrian paper to the effect that Queen Victoria had written some time before direct to Prince Bismarck, urging upon him to prevent the war between Russia and the Porte. The answer was evasive. Then followed a second letter, repeating the request more urgently. This time the reply was somewhat more positive in form, but was still not to the taste of the Queen, who then turned to the Emperor and made him and Germany responsible for the outbreak of war. 'Let us suppose,' commented the Journal, 'that Germany had allowed herself to be "nobbled" . . . had struck an attitude and shouted "Peace in Europe!" and that Russia had not halted at the word of command, but let her troops advance—what would have happened then? Why we should then, for the maintenance of peace, have been obliged to wage war against Russia, which at the best would serve to pull the chestnuts out of the fire for magnanimous Albion, or our word of command would have proved to be impotent, and we should have made ourselves ridiculous—and ridiculous merely in the service of England, a Power that has never honestly wished us well, and has only accepted our position in Europe in the hope that it may some day be utilised for the furtherance of its own mercenary policy.' <sup>1</sup>

In April, 1877, Russia declared war against Turkey, and the question became pressing what was to be the attitude of Great Britain. On this subject Glad-

<sup>1</sup> *Bismarck, Some Secret Pages of his History*, by M. Busch, vol. ii. pp. 297-99.

stone at least had no doubts. In one of his greatest parliamentary efforts (May 7) he said :

‘ Sir, There were other days when England was the hope of freedom. Wherever in the world a high aspiration was entertained, or a noble blow was struck, it was to England that the eyes of the oppressed were always turned—to this favourite, this darling home of so much privilege and so much happiness, where the people who had built up a noble edifice for themselves would, it was well known, be ready to do what in them lay to secure the benefit of the same inestimable boon for others. You talk to me of the established tradition and policy in regard to Turkey. I appeal to an established tradition, older, wider, nobler far—a tradition not which disregards British interests, but which teaches you to seek the promotion of those interests in obeying the dictates of honour and justice. And, Sir, what is to be the end of this ? Are we to dress up the fantastic ideas some people entertain about this policy or that policy in the garb of British interests, and then, with a new and base idolatry, fall down and worship them ? or are we to look not at the sentiment but at the hard facts of the case . . . that it is the populations of those countries that will ultimately possess them, or that will ultimately determine their abiding condition ? It is to this fact, this law, that we should look. There is now before the world a glorious prize. A portion of those unhappy people are still, as yet, making an effort to retrieve what they have lost so long, but have not ceased to love and to desire. I speak of those in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Another portion—in a land

of heroes such as the world has rarely seen—stand on the rocks of Montenegro, and are ready now, as they have ever been during the 400 years of their exile from their fertile plains, to sweep down from their fastnesses and meet the Turk at any odds, for the re-establishment of justice and of peace in those countries. Another portion still, the 5,000,000 of Bulgarians, cowed and beaten down to the ground, hardly venturing to look upwards, even to their father in heaven, have extended their hands to you ; they have sent you their petition, they have prayed for your help and protection. They have told you that they do not seek alliance with Russia, or with a foreign Power, but that they seek to be delivered from an intolerable burden of woe and shame. That burden of woe and shame—the greatest that exists on God's earth—is one that we thought united Europe was about to remove ; but to removing which, for the present, you seem to have no efficacious means of offering even the smallest practical contribution. But, Sir, the removal of that load of woe and shame is a great and noble prize. It is a prize well worth competing for. It is not yet too late to try to win it. . . . But be assured that whether you mean to claim for yourselves even a single leaf in that immortal chaplet of renown, which will be the reward of true labour in that cause, or whether you turn your backs upon that cause and upon your own duty, I believe, for one, that the knell of Turkish tyranny in these provinces has sounded. So far as human eye can judge, it is about to be destroyed. The destruction may not come in the way or by the means which we should choose ; but come this

boon from what hand it may, it will be a noble boon, and as a noble boon will be gladly accepted by Christendom and the world.' <sup>1</sup> Translated into the language of everyday life all this meant that, whatever the danger to British interests of Russian ascendancy in Turkey, this danger must be risked sooner than that the Slav peoples should continue to be ground down under the axe of Turkish misrule.

The attitude of the Government had been explained by Disraeli in the preceding August. 'We are always treated as if we had some peculiar alliance with the Turkish Government, as if we were their peculiar friends, and even as if we were expected to uphold them in any enormity they might commit. . . . We are, it is true, the allies of the Sultan of Turkey. So is Russia, so is Austria, so is France and so are others. We are also their partners in a tripartite treaty, in which we not only generally but singly guarantee with France and Austria the territorial integrity of Turkey. These are our engagements, and they are the engagements that we endeavour to fulfil. And if these engagements, renovated and repeated only four years ago by the wisdom of Europe, are to be treated . . . as idle wind and chaff, and if we are to be told that our political duty is by force to expel the Turks to the other side of the Bosphorus, then politics cease to be an art, statesmanship becomes a mere mockery, and instead of being a House of Commons faithful to its traditions, and which is always influenced, I have ever thought, by sound principles of policy, whoever may be its leaders, we had better at once

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Gladstone*, vol. ii. pp. 174-6.

resolve ourselves into one of those revolutionary clubs which settle all political questions with the same ease as the honourable and learned member (Sir William Harcourt). Sir, we refused to join in the Berlin Note, because we were convinced that if we made that step we should very soon see a material interference in Turkey; and we were not of opinion that by a system of material guarantees the great question which the honourable and learned gentleman adverted to would be solved either for the general welfare of the world or for the interests of England, which after all must be our sovereign care. The Government of the Porte was never for a moment misled by the arrival of the British fleet in Besika Bay. They were perfectly aware when the fleet came there, it was not to prop up any decaying, obsolete Government, nor did its presence there sanction any of those enormities which are the subject of our painful discussion to-night. What may be the fate of the Eastern part of Europe it would be arrogant for me to speculate upon, and if I had any thoughts on the subject I should not be so imprudent or so indiscreet as to take this opportunity to express them. But I am sure that, so long as England is ruled by English parties who understand the principles on which our Empire is founded, and who are resolved to maintain that Empire, our influence in that part of the world can never be looked upon with indifference. If it should happen that the Government which controls the greater portion of those fair lands is found to be incompetent for its purpose, neither England nor any of the great Powers will shrink from



fulfilling the high political and moral duty which will then devolve upon them. But, Sir, we must not jump at conclusions so quickly as is now the fashion. There is nothing to justify us in talking in such a vein of Turkey, as has and is being at this moment entertained. The present is a state of affairs which requires the most vigilant examination and the most careful management. But those who suppose that England ever would uphold, or at this moment particularly is upholding, Turkey from blind superstition and from a want of sympathy with the highest aspirations of humanity, are deceived. What our duty is at this critical moment is to maintain the Empire of England. Nor will we ever take a step, though it may obtain for the moment a false quiet and a false prosperity, that hazards the existence of that Empire.' <sup>1</sup>

It was the opinion of Lord Granville, who himself objected to the veiled support of the Porte which seemed to characterise the policy of the Government, that Gladstone 'made too light of giving Russia a material standpoint in European Turkey.' <sup>2</sup> Lord Hartington wrote to Lord Granville: '*I don't feel the slightest confidence in Russia*, and I think that it would be a mistake to base our policy in any degree on Russian assurances. If Russia should occupy the Provinces, I doubt whether, under certain circumstances, the Government would be wrong in taking some steps for the protection of Constantinople and the Bosphorus. . . . Are we in any case to look on at Russia establishing a footing

<sup>1</sup> *Selected Speeches*, vol. ii. pp. 159-60.

<sup>2</sup> *Life of Lord Granville*, vol. ii. p. 165.

in Turkey and more or less threatening Constantinople, without any security for the Emperor's assurances? The danger with the present Government seems to be that they may encourage the Turks, and lead them to expect that we shall do more than this.' <sup>1</sup> On the other hand, Mr. Gladstone and his adherents were 'so anxious to get rid of the Turks, and so confident in the good intentions of Russia, that they don't care to look at what may follow the destruction of the Turkish Government.' <sup>2</sup>

▼ The defeat of the Turkish armies in January, 1878, and the advance of the Russian army into the immediate neighbourhood of Constantinople, called forth a strong anti-Russian feeling in England. When Turkey was beaten to its knees, and the treaty of San Stefano exacted from her, under which her European possessions would have been an appanage of her conqueror, hatred and distrust of Russia seemed to overwhelm the hatred that had been felt for Turkey; though, in fact, amongst large classes of the community the latter feeling was still very strong, and only waited its opportunity to assert itself vigorously.

Such being the temper of the nation, and when we consider what had been the traditional policy of England regarding Turkey, it was natural enough that a statesman of imperialist proclivities, bent on redeeming England from any connexion with the Manchester School, should have cried 'halt' to the Russian advance, and insisted that the terms of the peace between Russia and Turkey should be submitted to the examination of a European Con-

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 168.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

ference. Under the treaty of San Stefano,<sup>1</sup> signed March 17, 1878, Turkey in Europe, for all practical purposes, ceased to be. The treaty, in the words of Lord Beaconsfield, created 'a large state which, under the name of Bulgaria, is inhabited by many races not Bulgarian. This Bulgaria goes to the shores of the Black Sea and seizes the ports of that sea; it extends to the coast of the Aegean and appropriates the ports of that sea. The treaty provides for the government of this new Bulgaria, under a prince who is to be selected by Russia; its administration is to be organised and supervised by a commissary of Russia, and this new state is to be garrisoned, I say for an indefinite period, but at all events for two years certain, by Russia.'<sup>2</sup>

Russia at first seemed inclined to play with the English demand; but when the reserves were called out, and it became apparent that Great Britain would risk a war rather than draw back, she yielded; and the Berlin Congress substituted a new treaty for that of San Stefano. But even when a Congress had been decided upon, the situation was still critical. 'Russia,' wrote Lord Salisbury on April 24, 1878, 'gives me the impression of a Government desperately anxious for peace, and driven on by some fate towards war.'<sup>3</sup> At the Congress of Berlin, Russia had to submit to the resettlement of her contract with Turkey, from the

<sup>1</sup> The text is set out in *The European Concert and the Eastern Question*, by T. E. Holland, pp. 335-48.

<sup>2</sup> *Selected Speeches*, vol. ii. p. 170.

<sup>3</sup> *Life of Lord Lyons*, p. 372.

point of view of the general interest of Europe? The keynote to the Congress was given by Prince Bismarck, when he explained that the stipulations of the Treaty of San Stefano were in several points of a nature to modify 'the state of things as fixed by former European Conventions,' and that the business of the meeting was to submit that treaty 'to the free discussion of the Cabinets, signatories of the Treaties of 1856 and 1871.' The Russian plenipotentiary, Count Schouvaloff, himself admitted a little later that the treaty of San Stefano had been merely 'a preliminary convention, having obligatory force only upon the two contracting parties, by which Russia intended to let the Turkish Government know beforehand the demands she would formulate later before Europe.'<sup>1</sup> At the same time Russia had been the victor in a great war, and it was idle to expect that she would be content at obtaining nothing for her pains. Her frontiers were greatly extended in Asia Minor, Turkey ceding the territories of Astrachan, Kars and Batoum, with the latter port.

In the face of this, it was poor consolation for Turkey that under the convention of June 4, 1878, England engaged, if any attempt should be made at any future time by Russia to take possession of any further Turkish territories in Asia, to join the Sultan in defending them by force of arms; especially as the *quid pro quo* obtained by England was the assignment of the island of Cyprus, to be occupied and administered by Great Britain. Less

<sup>1</sup> *Parl. Papers*, 1878, Turkey, No. 39, p. 242.

onerous probably was the empty promise to introduce necessary reforms.<sup>1</sup>

The work of the Berlin Congress involved not merely the revision of the Treaty of San Stefano but that of its predecessors, the treaties of Paris and of London. 'A leading idea of these treaties,' writes Dr. Holland, 'had been the preservation of the independence and territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire, and of its sovereign rights over the vassal principalities. All this was now to be changed. The Porte was to be virtually reduced to tutelage, and its suzerainty over the Principalities was to be finally extinguished.'<sup>2</sup>

In the opinion of Lord Beaconsfield, the most important British success of the Berlin Congress was the removal of the 'Great Bulgaria,' created by the treaty of San Stefano. Under the new treaty Bulgaria was divided into three portions. The district north of the Balkans became the autonomous tributary province of Bulgaria; that immediately south of that range became the Turkish province of Eastern Roumelia, which, however, was to obtain 'administrative autonomy'; the most southerly portion was restored to Turkey without limitations.

'My Lords,' said Lord Beaconsfield, 'in these matters the Congress of Berlin has made great changes. They have restored to the Sultan two-thirds of the territory which was to have formed the great Bulgarian State. They have restored to him upwards of 30,000 geographical square miles and 2,500,000

<sup>1</sup> The text of the Convention is in Mowat's *Select Treaties*, pp. 78-9.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 222.

of population—that territory, being the richest in the Balkans, where most of the land is rich, and the population one of the wealthiest, most ingenious, and most loyal of his subjects. The frontiers of this State have been pushed forward from the mere environs of Salonica and Adrianople to the lines of the Balkans and Trajan's Pass ; the new Principality which was to exercise such an influence, and produce a revolution in the disposition of the territory and policy of that part of the globe, is now merely a state in the valley of the Danube, and both in its extent and its population is reduced to one-third of what was contemplated by the treaty of San Stefano.' <sup>1</sup> Lord Beaconsfield was undoubtedly wholly wrong in his estimate of what the future had in store. Whatever we may think of the Bulgarians of to-day, we must recognise that it was foolish to expect to confine a growing nation within the baby clothes of its infancy. It was good luck, not good management, that brought about that the new Bulgaria did not prove the docile creature of Russia she was expected to be. 'Probably at St. Petersburg,' wrote Bismarck, 'they had reckoned on Bulgaria, when it was separated from Turkey, remaining permanently in dependence on Russia. Even if the peace of San Stefano had been carried out intact, this calculation would probably have proved false.' <sup>2</sup>

We have seen that Bismarck had no preconceived objections to Russia's expansion at the expense of Turkey. At the same time he had no intention to burn his ships and to give serious offence to other

<sup>1</sup> *Selected Speeches*, vol. ii. pp. 181-2.

<sup>2</sup> *Bismarck, Reflections*, vol. ii. p. 232.

Powers, on behalf of an ally who might at any moment play him false. He had accordingly resisted the wiles of Russian statesmen who had sought to obtain promise of support in case of a war between Russia and Austria.<sup>1</sup> He persisted in playing at the Berlin Congress the part of the honest broker ; though thereby he gave considerable offence to his Russian colleagues. 'It was expected at St. Petersburg,' wrote Bismarck, 'that in the diplomatic discussion for carrying out the decisions of the Berlin Congress we should immediately, in every case, support and carry through the Russian interpretation as opposed to that of Austria and England, and especially without any preliminary understanding between Berlin and St. Petersburg.' Bismarck admits that he would often have favoured the Russian desires had he but known them. Even when he gave his support he only received a grumbling disapproval. "Votre amitié est trop Platonique," said reproachfully the Empress Marie to one of our representatives. It is true that the friendship of the cabinet of one great Power for the others always remains Platonic to a certain point ; for no great Power can place itself exclusively at the service of another. It will always have to keep in view not only existing, but future, relations to the others, and must, as far as possible, avoid lasting fundamental hostility with any of them. That is particularly important for Germany, with its central position, which is open to attack on three sides.' <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Bismarck, Reflections*, vol. ii. pp. 228-32.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 234-5. According to Sir C. Dilke, 'an arrangement was discussed by Lord Beaconsfield and Count Andrassy at the

One particular provision of the Berlin treaty sounds a little strange to-day, when vaunted as a triumph of British diplomacy—Bosnia and Herzegovina were handed over to the tutelage of Austria, which no doubt proved to be no bad guardian, so far as material development was concerned. In fact, however, this particular arrangement seems to have been settled by a secret compact between Russia and Austria before the beginning of the war. According to Bismarck, the treaty of January 15, 1877, which embodied an agreement come to between the Russian and Austrian Emperors on July 8, 1876, at Reichstadt, 'and not the Berlin Congress, is the foundation of the Austrian possession of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and during her war with the Turks secured to Russia the neutrality of Austria.'<sup>1</sup> Perhaps the Balkan State, which received the most unfair treatment both under the treaty of San Stefano and that of Berlin, was Roumania. Roumanian troops had done yeoman service, fighting side by side with Russian, against Turkey. And yet Roumania found herself compelled to restore to Russia Bessarabia, which it had obtained at the time of the

time of the Treaty of Berlin by which Austria and England were jointly to guarantee the integrity of Turkish territory—Austria in Europe and England in Asia Minor. Turkish territory . . . at that time meant practically . . . Eastern Roumelia and the Balkan line. Moreover there was behind this the understanding that England was to come to the assistance of Austria in Europe and Austria to make common cause with England in the event of Turkey being attacked in Asia Minor. But this offer of an English alliance to Austria fell through in the same way in which the suggestion of England in October last (1886) failed to receive encouragement.' (*The Present Position of European Politics*, p. 221.)

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 232.



treaty of Paris. In all probability it was this rankling sore which in some measure accounted for the long delay before Roumania entered as a partner of the allies into the Great War.

In extolling the provisions of the treaty of Berlin, Lord Beaconsfield declared that the effect of the arrangement regarding Bosnia and Herzegovina was to create Austria as 'a barrier to Slav aggression.' Europe was in time to learn to its cost that there were greater dangers possible than 'Slav aggression.'

It is easy, however, to be wise after the event, and inasmuch as the Berlin Congress had recalled to life the Concert of Europe and compelled haughty Russia to yield obedience to its dictates, the accomplishment of 'Peace with honour' might fairly seem a cause for congratulation. In any case, it is interesting to compare with Lord Beaconsfield's complacent self-congratulations the gloomy forebodings of our ambassador at Constantinople. Sir H. Layard saw in the treaty of Berlin 'the elements of future wars and disorders without number, and an upsetting of all the principles of justice and right which have hitherto governed the relations and intercourse of states. Force and fraud have triumphed, and, when Turkey has been completely destroyed and cut up under the new system, it will probably be applied with similar successful results to other countries. Russia has gained, with the assistance of Germany, all and more than she wanted. . . . I anticipate no end of trouble and bloodshed for years to come in this unhappy country.'<sup>1</sup> Still the horrors of the Bulgarian atrocities, whatever there may have been

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Lord Lyons*, pp. 390-1.

of exaggeration in the stories, had stirred to its depths the consciences of many thousands of the British working and middle classes. There was an uncomfortable feeling that the British Government had been slack and remiss in its service to the right, and had shown a Machiavellian cynicism in the presence of moral issues. In the introductory chapter attention has been called to the action and reaction of the respective characters of the two leaders, Disraeli and Gladstone. Here we may gratefully note that, whatever may have been Gladstone's failings, the line he took up proved, in the future, to be, where the Balkan States were concerned, a valuable asset in favour of British interests. The time came when, yielding to the German tempter, Bulgaria put aside all sentimental considerations. But so long as sentiment held sway, the name of Gladstone and of the Liberal party he led to victory, was a name to conjure with at any gathering of Bulgarians.

Be this as it may, in the General Election, which took place in 1880, the Conservatives were swept from power, and Gladstone was given the opportunity of again showing how far his constructive abilities were on a level with his powers, as moralist and agitator. The first consequences of having as Prime Minister one who had 'used a mode of speech and language different in some degree from what I should have employed had I been the leader of a party or a candidate for office,'<sup>1</sup> was the necessity for publishing an apology for reckless words directed against Austria.

<sup>1</sup> Gladstone's own words to the Queen, *Life*, vol. ii. p. 260.

Still, in spite of the dislike with which Bismarck, the uncrowned king of European diplomacy, regarded Gladstone, he was reassured when Lord Granville resumed the charge of the Foreign Office. 'I think you will find,' wrote Lord Odo Russell, 'Prince Bismarck all you can wish, anxious for the most friendly relations with England, and willing to act in concert with her Majesty's Government when asked to do so. He earnestly desires peace for the welfare of Germany, and he likes the Anglo-French alliance, because he looks upon it as "the basis of peace in Europe." He dreads a Russo-French alliance against Germany, and makes up to France to keep her out of Russia's way, and he made the Austro-German defensive treaty (1879) to isolate Russia more completely. His dread of Russia is founded on the belief that the Panslavists are bent on driving the Czar into war again, to wipe out the humiliation of having had to turn back from the very gate of Constantinople, at the dictation of Europe, and he reckons on his defensive alliance with Austria to keep the Panslavists in check until the peace party returns to power in Russia, when, according to circumstances, he will be equally willing to re-establish the "Drei-Kaiser bund," if he can see a guarantee of peace for Germany in it. Meanwhile Prince Bismarck looks to England as the leading peace Power in Europe, and you will therefore find him well disposed to make common cause with Her Majesty's Government if you should at any time require his services.'<sup>1</sup>

All this was perhaps sketched a little *couleur de*

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Lord Granville*, vol. ii. p. 209.

rose, and it does not seem that Bismarck showed any great readiness to help when the Concert of Europe was needed to secure the interests of Montenegro and of Greece. According to Lord Odo, writing on May 29, 1880: 'Ever since I have been in Berlin, Prince Bismarck has shown an earnest desire for an alliance with England, but his attempts to establish cordial and intimate relations with Her Majesty's Government and his repeated offers of co-operation were never met in a corresponding spirit. Personally I regretted it, because I believed that we might have derived real and lasting advantages from an intimate understanding with Germany.'<sup>1</sup> No doubt, as Lord Fitz Maurice explains, Lord Salisbury, in spite of strong sympathies with the Germanic Powers, shied from the prospect of an alliance, because he recognised that the price of such an alliance might be an acknowledgment of the permanency of the German acquisition of Alsace-Lorraine. It is strange, however, to find Lord Odo writing: 'He will not understand why England should not be on terms as intimate and cordial with Germany as with France. He made a last attempt at realising his wishes, when he thought that Indian difficulties might lead us into a serious conflict with Russia. He took the initiative, concluded the Austro-German Alliance and isolated Russia. We rejoiced "at the good tidings!" Bismarck then gave up all hope of securing the alliance of England and turned to France.'<sup>2</sup> Bismarck must have chuckled when he imposed upon the British Ambassador the idea that the Austro-German alliance had been arranged to protect British in-

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 211.<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 211.

terests in the East ! In fact two leading motives were never far from Bismarck's thoughts, *do ut des* and *divide et impera*. In this state of things, whatever may have been the case regarding Russia, the British statesman would indeed have had need of a long spoon who went out to sup with Prince Bismarck !

It was good luck rather than design which solved the Montenegro difficulty, leading the Sultan to comply with the demands, which he wrongly supposed to be made by the collective Powers. Lord Odo was the friend and admirer of Bismarck ; but this is what is gathered from conversations with him, held in October, 1880 : ' The impression I have derived from them is, that he is rather jealous of Her Majesty's Government having been put forward by all the Powers to take the lead in Eastern affairs. His solution of the problem, when the Turkish Government collapses, would be the peaceful division of influence in the Balkan Peninsula between Austria and Russia, the former to extend to the Aegean, the latter to the Straits, and Germany—that is, himself—to mediate between them. The intervention of England as a leader of a concert of Powers stands in the way of his wishes and of the plan he has made for his neighbours, whom he looks upon as the Sultan's natural heirs. England's interests are in Egypt and Asia, as those of France are in Syria and Tunis ; and neither England nor France, he thinks, should busy themselves about the Sultan's European dominions, which do not concern them as they do Germany's neighbours, Austria and Russia.' <sup>1</sup> When, at last, Bismarck was willing to

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Lord Granville*, vol. ii. p. 225.

put his shoulder to the wheel on behalf of Greek interests, his motive seems rather to have been the desire to snub France than to promote Greek interests. Still the fact remained that the concert had worked successfully ; and that Greece obtained Thessaly, that province linked with Hellas by so many past associations.<sup>1</sup>

It was on the subject of foreign policy that the Liberals had gained their great triumph in 1880. It was on questions of foreign policy that they gradually lost the confidence of the country. The enfranchisement of the agricultural labourers and their temporary gratitude to the party that had given them the vote served to confuse the issue ; but there can be no question that in 1885 there was a great revolution of feeling amongst the old voters. The questions that had come to the fore, belonging as they do to the sphere of imperial and colonial policy, do not directly concern us here ; but it must be noted that in the handling of them there was conspicuous throughout a note of uncertainty, and inability to take a direct line and then to stick to it. Thus, in the case of the Transvaal, rightly or wrongly, during the Midlothian campaign, Mr. Gladstone had passionately maintained that its annexation by Great Britain had been not only politically inexpedient but a moral crime ; and yet, when Mr. Gladstone came to power, this pretended iniquity was not at once dealt with ; and there was needed the stimulus of British defeat and disgrace before the British Government took the line which, from

<sup>1</sup> For text of Convention of May 24, 1881, see *The European Concert in the Eastern Question*, pp. 60-9.

their point of view, had been, from the first, obligatory.

It is impossible to summarise in a few words the successive blunders in Egypt ; but no one can read Lord Cromer's *Modern Egypt* or even the apology for the conduct of affairs by the Liberal Government contained in Lord Morley's *Life of Mr. Gladstone* without recognising that the secret of their failure lay largely in this, that they were unable or unwilling to look facts in the face ; that they tried to think that things were as they wished them to be, and so brought on themselves successive disappointments which culminated in the martyrdom of Gordon. It gives, surely, serious food for thought that the same Government which had so long resisted sending an expedition to the Soudan, when Gordon's life was in danger, was prepared to make a sudden *volte face* after his death at the dictation of a wholly uninformed British public opinion. That the expedition was not sent was due to the emergence of a war cloud in a new quarter.

In 1884 Bismarck had concluded with Russia a secret treaty of neutrality ' without the knowledge and behind the backs of the other parties of the triple alliance, viz. Austria-Hungary and Italy. It was intended to protect Germany, in the event of Austria-Hungary becoming reconciled with Russia, or of the long-talked-of alliance between France and Russia taking effect. Russia, however, interpreted this treaty, which secured her western frontier, as also giving her a free hand in Asia, and Prince Bismarck gave a tacit approval, as part of the new policy to a system of persistent annoyance against

Great Britain.'<sup>1</sup> Mr. Gladstone believed that Russian energies, turned from their natural channel in south-east Europe, had taken the direction of expansion in Asia. But in fact such expansion was natural, and, indeed, inevitable, and on similar lines to that of our Indian Empire. In either case expansion would go on till it reached a strong consolidated country, capable of protecting its own interest. Unfortunately the matter had been complicated by querulous complaints on the part of British statesmen, and mendacious statements by responsible Russian officials. Still reasonable men agreed with Disraeli (1876) that Asia was large enough for the destinies of both Russia and England.

At the same time it was necessary that Afghanistan should remain independent, and in July, 1880, the Ameer received a distinct promise of help, in case of interference by any Foreign Power. The advance of Russia made necessary the delimitation of the frontiers of Afghanistan. But after that the Commission had been appointed, the Russian representative delayed his appearance, and Russian troops, meanwhile, penetrated further south into what had been recognised as Afghan territory. On March 29 a collision occurred between Russian and Afghan troops. The British fleet occupied Port Hamilton, off the southern coast of Korea, and Mr. Gladstone proposed a vote of credit for £11,000,000. War seemed inevitable; but Russia, no more than England, really desired another war; so that a compromise was arrived at, under which the disputed responsibility for the 'incident' was referred to an arbitrator,

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Lord Granville*, vol. ii. p. 422.



the Russian advance, meanwhile, coming to a halt. Although it was at the time severely criticised, the arrangement arrived at seems to have secured to Afghanistan a strategical frontier; and there was no evidence in the conduct of the matter by the Government of that indecision which was so apparent in other quarters of the world.

The Pendjeh 'incident,' along with the Transvaal and Egypt, and the question of German colonisation, which from 1884 onwards played so leading a part in creating Anglo-German relations, do not directly concern us here. But it is impossible wholly to ignore these matters because of the light they throw on European policy.

In 1882 we find Bismarck still professing the most friendly feelings towards England. Lord Fitz Maurice is able to print an interesting private letter which said :

'In the absence of any direct German interests in the future settlement of Egyptian affairs, and with the certainty that France and the probability that Russia would, under given circumstances, become our opponents, I have advocated with the Emperor the necessity of avoiding—independently of the occasionally astounding policy of the succeeding English cabinets—every conflict with the English nation, and public opinion in England, which will influence national feeling in England against us, so long as we are not forced into it by paramount German interests. . . . We can only give positive support to English wishes within very narrow limits, unless we are prepared to take up a more hostile position than necessary towards Russia, and to call forth not

only in France, but in a great majority of the people of England, the unfounded suspicion that our policy tends to disunite the two great Western Powers and to "manœuvre" them into war with each other, which both fear and dread the cost of.

'I have encountered no difficulties in my endeavours with the Emperor to render our policy friendly to England, but I have had to overcome opposition and contradiction at every single succeeding step at Vienna, partly from Mr. Gladstone's former unfounded menaces against Austria, partly from Austrian Turkophilism, not only political but also speculative and financial, in regard to contemplated railway enterprises, and partly also from the want of habit at Vienna to consider the future of political questions beyond the current week.

'I am not yet thoroughly well informed in regard to the causes of the violent antagonism of a great part of our German press against England. When it is not merely the innate German tendency always to "find fault" and to "know better," I am inclined to think it is partly due to the financial sorrows of great financiers connected with the larger newspapers, and partly to the large sums of money expended by the French, and the still larger sums of money expended by the Russians to bribe the German press.

'The greatest difficulty, however, we encounter, in trying to give a practical expression to our sympathies for and our relations with England, is in the absolute impossibility of confidential intercourse, in consequence of the indiscretion of English statesmen in their communications to Parliament, and in the

absence of security in alliances, for which the crown is not answerable in England, but only the fleeting cabinets of the day. It is therefore difficult to initiate a reliable understanding with England otherwise than publicly and in the face of all Europe. Such public negotiations from their initiation, and even without arriving at any definite result, will be highly detrimental to most of our European relations ; but all these difficulties should not be allowed to stand in the way of our cordially entertaining any advances made to us, and to prevent us from cultivating the consolidation of our and Austria's friendship with England.' <sup>1</sup>

It was a peculiarly Bismarckian touch to recognise openly the existence of suspicions, which in fact were almost certainly justified. With regard to the press, if Busch is to be trusted, the tone adopted by his chief, when giving suggestions in the same year, was not too friendly to England.<sup>2</sup> It may be counted to Mr. Gladstone for righteousness that he at least knew how to resist the voice of the stalwart siren. 'I am afraid,' he wrote to Lord Granville in 1883, 'that none of the three "Northern" Powers are to be trusted, in respect to the Balkan Peninsula and

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Lord Granville*, vol. ii. pp. 274-6. On January 26, 1889, Bismarck said in the Reichstag : 'I regard England as our old traditional ally, with whom we have no conflicts of interest. When I say "ally" I do not use the word in its diplomatic sense ; we have no treaty with England ; but I wish to preserve the close relationship with England which we have had now for over 150 years, even in colonial questions. And if I was satisfied we were in danger of losing it, I should be careful to try and prevent that happening.' (Quoted in *The Round Table*, No. 26, p. 256.)

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.* vol. iii. pp. 51-4.

the Emancipated States. Austria has been ostentatiously taught to turn her eyes eastwards by friends and pretended friends in the west, and I fear that Bismarck only waits his opportunity to egg her onwards in this direction, taking compensation in his own neighbourhood. It is, I am convinced, a mad policy for her. She has difficulty enough with the Slavs she has, who differ in race only. To take Slavs of another religion will be a yet more hazardous experiment, unless she will become a real Slav Power, and I do not see that this is possible. . . . Austria seems to have a notion, probably a false one, that she can *strengthen* herself by extension eastwards. Unfortunately it has been her besetting sin to make light of the sympathies of the populations. On the whole, any fear I have of Austria is in the main a fear that Bismarck may think fit to propel her.' <sup>1</sup>

There can be no question that Bismarck encouraged Jules Ferry, who became French Prime Minister in 1883, in his colonial adventures, so as to keep England and France at arm's length. In June, 1884, Lord Lyons wrote from France: 'Generally speaking, I am very unhappy about the growing ill-will between France and England which exists on both sides of the Channel. It is not that I suppose that France has any deliberate intention of going to war with us. But the two nations come into contact in every part of the globe. In every part of it questions arise which, in the present state of feeling, excite mutual suspicion and irritation. Who can say when and where, in this state of things, some local events may not produce a serious quarrel, or some high-

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Lord Granville*, vol. ii. pp. 276-7.

handed proceedings of some hot-headed officials occasion an actual collision.' <sup>1</sup>

In 1885 Bismarck began openly to bluster and complain bitterly of England, when an event took place that gave him pause. Jules Ferry fell from power, March 30, on a vote of credit for the Chinese War. 'Ferry,' wrote Lord Granville, 'is certainly no loss to us. He arrived at the Quai d'Orsay quite ignorant of foreign affairs; and the more he learnt of them the more subservient he became to Bismarck and the more tricky to us.' <sup>2</sup> In this state of things Bismarck adopted a more conciliatory policy. As early as 1884 the subject of Heligoland was broached, and in the following year Lord Granville, as part of a friendly arrangement with regard to Egypt and colonial questions, was 'prepared to ask the cabinet to enter into a friendly consideration of the suggested plans respecting Heligoland and of the necessary conditions which should attach to it.' <sup>3</sup> It should be noted that Bismarck had openly declared the need of a great harbour at Heligoland as part of a scheme for opening a way into the Baltic; so that, when an unoffending pleasure resort became afterwards converted into a powerful place of arms, it did not come about without previous warning to England. With the resignation of the Liberal Government in 1885, Lord Granville's time at the Foreign Office came to an end. What great personal charm and popularity could effect, he had done; but it was felt, when Lord Rosebery became Foreign Secretary in the short-lived administration of 1886,

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Lord Granville*, vol. ii. p. 333.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 434-5.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 425.

that a new generation had grown up, requiring new men and new methods.

Still it proved impossible for either party to escape from the blind alley of constant friction with France, and constant attempts at the promotion of real friendly feelings between England and Germany, which never quite met with success.<sup>1</sup> In 1890, as part of a friendly arrangement settling outstanding East African questions in a manner not unfavourable to Great Britain, Lord Salisbury undertook, subject to the assent of Parliament, to cede to Germany the sovereignty over the Island of Heligoland, together with its dependencies. Henceforth British proceedings in Egypt received the half-sulky sanction of Germany; but there was no cordiality in the mutual relations of the two countries.

Writing of 1893, Lord Cromer thus describes the state of feeling in England: 'The position of English parties was at this time somewhat peculiar. . . . An important section of the Liberal party, whilst ready to follow Mr. Gladstone's guidance in internal affairs, was disposed to support the foreign policy of Lord Salisbury. For some years previously the influence of what used to be known as the Manchester or peace-at-any-price school had been waning. This

<sup>1</sup> In October, 1886, according to Sir C. Dilke, 'two great refusals of alliances took place. France, I am told, declined a formal alliance with Russia and Austria declined an alliance with Great Britain. . . . France was anxious not to take any steps that might precipitate a war, and Austria thought that she could accomplish the task which both her statesmen and Lord Salisbury had in view, viz. the prevention of war with Russia better by remaining free. . . . The Austro-British alliance would, in my belief, practically have secured peace, as Russia knows that whatever her earlier victories . . . England would fight on until she conquered.' (*Op. cit.* p. 16.)

school had been created by Cobden, and was the natural outcome of the rebound from the somewhat aggressive attitude and excessive interfering in the affairs of Continental nations which characterised the foreign policy of Lord Palmerston. Experience had shown that a policy of complete isolation was detrimental to British interests, and might even be fraught with more dangers to the peace of the world than one of undue interference. A happy and rational mean between the two extremes had been found by Lord Salisbury, whose foreign policy was approved by many Liberals, and was even vaunted by Mr. Gladstone himself. More than this, the defeats which British arms and policy had of late years sustained in South Africa, and still more the mismanagement of the affairs in the Sudan, had left a deep impression on the mind of the British nation. It was discovered that the indecision of a weak Government which did not know its own mind might be more dangerous to the interests of peace than the decisive action of a relatively strong Government, which allowed all the world to know that the dignified and rational defence of British interests abroad formed an essential part of its political programme. . . . A stern recognition of facts was better than the most pacific intentions. Recent experiences had shown that it was wiser to steer the ship of state than to allow her to drift rudderless down a dangerous channel. Thus the school of Liberal Imperialists came into being. The Liberal Imperialists looked to Lord Rosebery as their leader. It was thought that at the General Election of 1892 many waverers had decided to vote for the Gladstone candidate on

reflecting that, under Lord Rosebery's guidance, a foreign policy of which they could approve would be adopted.' <sup>1</sup>

During the last fifteen years of the nineteenth century Lord Salisbury was, with two short intervals, responsible for British foreign policy. There is a consensus of opinion that he did his work wisely and well. But it is difficult to draw from the history of these years general conclusions. In Lord Salisbury's words: 'The emblem of the Foreign Office ought to be the ancient Egyptian emblem of silence.' <sup>2</sup> Accordingly it follows that 'it is the misfortune of a foreign minister that the more the subject matters with which his diplomacy is concerned prosper and succeed, the less interest will his fellow-subjects take in the matter of that department!' <sup>3</sup> On the same occasion he declared: 'Our policy is well known to all the world. Our treaty obligations are matters of public property and our policy with respect to Europe and the Mediterranean has been avowed again and again to be a policy of peace, of maintaining things as they are, because we believe that in the state of things as they are there is a sufficient opportunity for the progress and prosperity of all those who inhabit those countries, without trusting anything to the sinister and hazardous arbitrament of war. That is our policy—to retain things as they are in Europe and the shores of the Mediterranean; and, if there is any particular change which I might indicate is in my opinion more per-

<sup>1</sup> *Abbas II.* pp. 28-30.

<sup>2</sup> Speech at Mansion House, *The Times*, August 11, 1887.

<sup>3</sup> Speech at Guildhall, *The Times*, November 12, 1889.



nicious than another, it is a change which will increase the territory of any of the Powers of Europe, because such a change would have the infallible effect of raising dread and apprehension and jealousy in other Powers, and of precipitating us into a catastrophe which we are all anxious to avoid. But when you pass from policy to the precise measures, diplomatic or material, which on some future occasion it may be the duty of this country to adopt, then I say, if I could foresee them I would not tell you what they were, and I tell you frankly that it is impossible for any Government to foresee them. They depend on conditions which we cannot foresee and on the actions of men over whom we have no control.'

The one aim and object of Lord Salisbury's policy was to secure the peace of Europe. When, whether or not through Lord Beaconsfield's proceedings, to which Lord Salisbury had given his assent, there was fear of war with Russia, he had sought safety in an informal alliance with Austria and Germany. 'I believe,' he had said in October, 1879, 'that in the strength and independence of Austria lie the best hopes of European stability and peace. What has happened within the last few weeks justifies us in hoping that Austria, if attacked, would not be alone. The newspapers say—I know not whether they say rightly—that a defensive alliance has been established between Germany and Austria. I will not pronounce any opinion as to the accuracy of that information; but I will only say this to you and all who value the peace of Europe and the independence of nations, I may say, without profanity, that it is "good tidings

of great joy.' ' <sup>1</sup> He valued the Triple Alliance because he believed that it conduced to peace. 'The limits of his relations with the Triple Alliance,' we are told, 'were marked in February, 1887, when, in order to prevent Italy from withdrawing from the Treaty, he guaranteed her against a naval attack by France, in an agreement for maintaining the *status quo* in the Mediterranean to which Austria was a party.' <sup>2</sup>

Lord Salisbury, however, had no prejudice against Russia, and rejoiced whole-heartedly when the subject of Afghanistan was no longer a subject of difference between the two Governments. There was, he insisted, 'abundant room for both Governments, if they would think so, for two generations to come to occupy themselves in civilising and increasing the prosperity of the vast regions they had brought under their sway.' <sup>3</sup> Some years later he protested against the assumption made by Bismarck, doubtless for his own ends, that there was a permanent, necessary antagonism between Russia and Great Britain. Such an idea was 'the superstition of an antiquated diplomacy.' <sup>4</sup>

With regard to Lord Salisbury's policy towards France, Lord FitzMaurice writes: 'Encouraged in 1886 by the existence of a friendly ministry in France, he, like Lord Granville, began by attempting a rapprochement with France; and, in order to gain her good-will, even went so far as to negotiate a treaty with the Porte for the evacuation of Egypt.

<sup>1</sup> Quoted, FitzMaurice, *op. cit.* vol. ii. p. 211.

<sup>2</sup> *Quarterly Review*, October, 1902.

<sup>3</sup> *The Times*, August 11, 1887.

<sup>4</sup> Speech at Guildhall, *The Times*, November 10, 1896.

But Lord Salisbury, like Lord Granville, soon discovered that the susceptibilities of France in regard to Egypt were by no means yet allayed, and that the ephemeral character of French ministries still presented a hopeless obstacle to any continuity of policy on their part.<sup>1</sup>

There was in Lord Salisbury a combination of honesty and of cynicism which was peculiar to him. 'We exaggerate,' he said in 1891, 'too much the importance and the effect of treaties. In this age of the world, and in view of the fearful risk which every disturbance brings upon any nation concerned in it, I do not think that we must rate too highly the effect of the bonds constituted by signatures upon a piece of paper. If nations in a great crisis act rightly, they will so act because they are in unison and in cordiality with each other, and not because they have bound themselves by protocols. Do not therefore pay too much attention to this talk you may have heard of alliances and treaties. For ourselves we have a simple rule. Our allies are those who wish to maintain territorial distribution as it is, without risking the fearful dangers of the terrible arbitrament of war. Our allies are those who desire peace and good-will.'<sup>2</sup>

To Lord Salisbury belonged the credit or good fortune of lifting foreign affairs above the contests of party politics. But even with this advantage the conduct of the foreign affairs of a democracy was ticklish work. 'Everything is said here freely,' he told a Scottish audience, 'with respect to the affairs

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.* vol. ii. p. 453.

<sup>2</sup> Speech at Mansion House, July 30, 1891.

of the Foreign Office. . . . The effect of the double consumption of all that is said, the effect of our, as it were, speaking in a public place where every one hears us is most embarrassing. When it is my good fortune to conclude a treaty, I desire my fellow-subjects shall approve it, but I desire no less ardently that they shall abstain from saying so, because, if they do, it necessarily follows that the people on the other side think there is something very bad for them in it and immediately resist it.' <sup>1</sup>

We have seen that the sheet anchor of Lord Salisbury's policy was peace, because peace was the foundation of confidence, and confidence was the end and object of his political creed.<sup>2</sup> But, in order that peace should prevail, there was need of two things: first, that each individual nation should be willing to agree to a policy of give and take, and secondly, that the Concert of Europe should be a reality. It was because of his recognition of the necessity of the first condition that he put forward this general plea. 'Consider our foreign work altogether. You should not consider this one case, or this other case, or the third case, but what has been the result when the whole issue is hung together. When the account books are totted up and the balance ascertained, then form your judgment, but do not form your judgment on the individual passing items. It may be quite true that there are matters on which you would do right to go to war, and yet the extreme step was not taken. But you must be sure, before you take that action, that there was no other possible

<sup>1</sup> Speech at Glasgow, *The Times*, May 21, 1891.

<sup>2</sup> Speech at Nottingham, *The Times*, November 27, 1889.

or immediate complication within view which made it necessary to economise the force that was at the disposal of the Government.' <sup>1</sup> With regard to the Concert of Europe no one was better fitted by temperament and intellect than was Lord Salisbury to recognise its limitations and imperfections. Still, in spite of those limitations and those imperfections, it was 'the embryo of the only possible structure of Europe which can save civilisation from the desolating effects of a disastrous war'; and, as such, must in every way be supported and encouraged.

It would be idle to claim for Lord Salisbury infallibility of judgment. He has been proved to have been wrong in his belief that wars henceforth would in all probability be precipitated by the madness of peoples and not by the malice prepense of their rulers. He may have exaggerated, even at the time when he was minister, the strength of the forces making for the maintenance of the *status quo* in Europe, and shown some lack of political insight in failing to apprehend the future trouble likely to be caused by Powers not yet satisfied and desiring their place in the sun. Nevertheless, whatever may have been Lord Salisbury's shortcomings, in his moral and intellectual strength, in his splendid contempt for the meaner tricks of politics, and in his single-hearted devotion to the interests of his country and of peace with honour, he was a British asset in the Councils of Europe, the value of which could only be appreciated when it was removed. No one more fitly represented before the monarchs and statesmen of Europe the kind of British Foreign Minister which

<sup>1</sup> Quoted *Quarterly Review*, October 1902, p. 675.

in our occasional moods of self-satisfaction we hope and believe to be typical.

Whilst it was easy to recognise that a policy of complete isolation might be detrimental to British interests, it was less easy to see how that isolation could be avoided. In 1885 and 1887 Lord Salisbury had risked handing over the Egyptian fellaheen to the tender mercies of the Turk in the endeavour to placate France and Turkey. But, happily for Egyptian interests and for the interests of the British Empire, his offer had been rejected with scorn. At any moment throughout these years a storm cloud might burst which would involve England in a war with France and Russia; and British statesmen were not so simple as to expect, should such a crisis take place, much help from Germany.

The darkest hour, however, is that which precedes the dawn; and there was needed the serious risk of an actual collision at Fashoda (1898) to bring home to the minds of responsible statesmen both in France and in England how harmful to the vital interests of either country would be a war between them. Where there is a will to bring about a remedy there is nearly always a way. And so at last, in 1904, an agreement was arrived at, from which has blossomed the close Anglo-French alliance of to-day.

Meanwhile, what were the relations between England and Germany? In 1900? Prince Bismarck retired, the young Emperor being unable to bear a rival near the throne. He intended to 'govern alone—with his own genius—and be able to cover

himself with glory.' <sup>1</sup> The extreme caution of the wise old chancellor was thrown to the winds ; and the first fruit of the new régime was the non-renewal of the secret treaty with Russia, which the Emperor, perhaps rightly, held to be inconsistent with the close alliance between Germany and Austria. There has been much controversy over the question, what were the Emperor's feelings towards England ? On the one hand, he had shown himself an unkind son, and the family associations to which he had done violence were closely bound up with love of English constitutional and social ideals. On the other hand, William himself showed by the frequency of his visits to England how much in many ways the English habits of life appealed to him. Upon the whole, it seems probable that his political ideals embraced Great Britain as a kind of naval Austria attached to Germany. But these ideals involved the truth of the assumption that England was to a very great extent a played-out Power, her people decadent, and herself reclining unworthily on a position of honour which the forbears of the present effete generation had won by toil and sacrifice. Far, then, as he probably was from ever contemplating even the possibility of a great European War, in which the two Teutonic peoples would take different sides, the megalomania that was ever growing in volume under the flattering prophecies of historians and professors, and the interested ambitions of great commercial and shipping interests on the make, led inevitably to a state of things full of danger to the peace of Europe.

<sup>1</sup> Bismarck's words to Busch, March 17, 1880, *op. cit.* vol. iii. p. 313.

Still the English people and their leaders went on their way, severely indifferent to danger signals that seemed to practical men to be somewhat theoretic. The first time when the British public began to realise what might be in store for them from the new régime was when, on the collapse of the Jameson raid, the German Emperor telegraphed to Kruger his congratulations, adding words which, if they meant anything, meant that in case of need, Germany would throw her sword into the scales on the side of the Boers against a common enemy. It had been a settled maxim among politicians of all schools in England that, whatever the wrongs or the rights of any particular controversy, South African questions must be settled by England alone and the people on the spot, without outside interference. The language of the telegram, therefore, seemed like an unexpected blow in the face. It is interesting to note the manner of its reception by Mr. Chamberlain, who belonged to a new school of British statesmen. It must be remembered that a flying squadron of powerful ships had already been made ready for possible developments ; and the scattered portions of the Empire at once declared their readiness to stand by Great Britain in case of need.

In these circumstances, Mr. Chamberlain, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, when taking the chair at a dinner to a newly appointed Governor of Queensland, on January 21, 1896, spoke as follows :

‘ A few weeks ago England appeared to stand alone in the world, surrounded by jealous competitors and by altogether unexpected hostility. Differences between ourselves and other nations, which



were of long standing, appeared suddenly to come to a head and assume threatening proportions ; and from quarters to which we might have looked for friendship and consideration—having regard to our traditions and to a certain community of interests—we were confronted with suspicion and even with hate. We had to recognise that even success itself, however legitimate, was imputed to us as a crime ; that our love of peace was taken as a sign of weakness ; and that our indifference to foreign criticism was taken as an invitation to insult us. The prospect of our discomfiture was regarded with hardly disguised satisfaction by our competitors, who at the same time must have been forced to own that we alone held our possessions throughout the world in trust for all, and that we admit them to our markets as freely as our own subjects. I regret that such a feeling should exist and that we should be forced to acknowledge its existence ; but, as it does exist, I rejoice that it has found expression. No better service was ever done to this nation, for it has enabled us to show, in face of all, that, while we are resolute to fulfil our obligations, we are equally determined to maintain our rights.

‘ Three weeks ago, in the words of Mr. Foster, the leader of the House of Commons of the Dominion of Canada, “ the Great Mother Empire stood splendidly isolated.” And how does she stand to-day ? She stands secure in the strength of her own resources, in the firm resolution of her people without respect to party, and in the abundant loyalty of her children from one end of the Empire to another.’ <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Mr. Chamberlain's Speeches*, ed. by C. Boyd, vol. i. pp. 361-2.

This was all very well ; but it must be remembered that twenty years ago the power of the Dominions was not what it is to-day ; and ‘isolation,’ however ‘splendid,’ presented many points of danger. What if the great European Powers, forgetting for the time their mutual dislike and jealousies, should combine to pull down the high places of that island home whose past good fortune and present prosperity contained so much that might move the envy of less fortunate peoples ? It would seem, as has been already stated, that about the time of the beginning of the South African War this danger really came within the range of practical politics. What must be the feelings of French and Russian statesmen, if such there be, who look back with a knowledge of the facts on the peril so narrowly averted in which they had almost plunged the most vital interests of their nations ? What would have been the position, in case of war, had Rehoboam succeeded Solomon in the exercise of sea power ? If, as seems probable, the scheme of coalescing against England fell through owing to the inevitable refusal of French statesmen to recognise as part of the acknowledged public law of Europe the provisions of the treaty of Frankfort, securing Alsace and Lorraine to Germany, then we may truthfully say that the Gods were just, and from the unpleasant, no less than from the pleasant, vices of men knew how to make whips to scourge them. By rendering impossible a future reconciliation between France and Germany, the German General Staff created the political situation, the final outcome of which we are witnessing to-day.

But, though British statesmen might use brave language about splendid isolation, just as a schoolboy whistles when returning through a churchyard on a dark night, when once European combinations came again within the range of probability, it was necessary to reconsider the whole basis of British policy and to mould it anew. These things belong to a new century and are outside our range. We may note, however, that whilst past prejudices were too strong to allow of Great Britain forming a definite alliance with any European state, still the *entente* with France, as time went on, took more and more the character of a genuine alliance ; and in the Far East the Anglo-Japanese alliance of August, 1905, openly gave the *quietus* to the doctrines of the past.

The present writer has already ventured to express his satisfaction that these things have been so. The final concert, not of Europe only, but of the world, to which we must look forward as the ultimate goal, however slow and laborious may be the road to its attainment, can only be reached by attending to the old truth that, 'Precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept ; line upon line, line upon line ; here a little and there a little.' It may sound a paradox, but it is probably true that in the present temper of the world the best prospect of durable peace lies in the existence of strong alliances of Powers, ready to wage a defensive war on behalf of each other's interests if attacked. It is highly probable that, had England been joined in a close alliance with France and Russia, so as to necessitate her intervention, Germany might have held back Austria from precipitating the Great War ; though whether, without

a change in the German spirit, that would have been in the long run a blessing either to Great Britain or to Europe must remain very doubtful. Consider the force that would reside in a federation of the English-speaking nations of the world, were such a consummation to become possible ; especially as that federation would be in close connexion with the Allied Powers in the Great War. Next to converting the temper that desires war, the best thing is to make war so dangerous a game that even those inclined to wax wanton will consider carefully before they embark upon it.

Meanwhile, the immediate need is to uphold the sanctity of treaty rights, the obligation of the solemnly given undertaking. Bismarck declared that 'all contracts between great states cease to be unconditionally binding as soon as they are tested by "the struggle for existence." No great nation will ever be induced to sacrifice its existence on the altar of fidelity to contract when it is compelled to choose between the two. The maxim "*ultra posse nemo obligatur*" holds good in spite of all treaty formulas whatsoever, nor can any treaty guarantee the degree of zeal and the amount of force that will be devoted to the discharge of obligations, when the private interests of those who lie under them no longer reinforce the text or its earliest interpretation.' <sup>1</sup> Yes ; but surely treaties do not become obsolete in the flash of an eye ; and, when they no longer seem applicable to existing conditions, the crudest public law obviously demands that they should be repudiated solemnly and with

<sup>1</sup> *Bismarck, Reflections*, vol. ii. p. 276.

due notice, so that those affected by the change should be damnified as little as possible. For instance, there was nothing to prevent Germany from announcing, while peace prevailed, that the circumstances under which she had become a guarantor of Belgian neutrality had so changed that henceforth she could no longer be a party to such undertaking. The concert of Europe, duly apprised of such an intention, whether at a European Conference or otherwise, would have been able to make the arrangements necessitated by the new state of things. Of course Germany would never have taken such a method of going to work, because the element of surprise would then have been wanting, and, without that element, the violation of Belgian neutrality would have missed its meaning. Now the surprise in such circumstances is like the action of a trustee who takes advantage of his position to defraud the beneficiary of the trust.

It has been sought, without extenuation and without malice, to tell in rough outline the complicated story of British policy in its connexion with European affairs. The story is by no means one of unchequered success or virtue ; and, as a nation, no less than as individuals, we have often done those things which we ought not to have done, and left undone those things which we ought to have done. Still, upon the whole, England has stood for two principles, both in themselves sacred, yet often apparently inconsistent with each other : fidelity to existing treaty undertakings, and sympathy with national aspirations. It is because we can, with proud confidence, maintain that, during this great

War, we have been fighting on behalf of these objects, that we look forward hopefully to a better day, when the sunshine of peace shall bring to luxurious bloom the seed, with difficulty preserved alive through the stress and strain of the conflict.

In dealing with the statements and views of individual British statesmen we have inevitably been mainly concerned with matters of detail. Statesmen, especially under a democratic system, must perforce work for the immediate present and live from hand to mouth. Still, though we admit this, we may recognise throughout the course of the history general tendencies at work, influencing the direction of events, even when the individual agents were, for the most part, unconscious of them. The *Zeitgeist* moves, though men may not recognise whither it is taking them.

It seems now generally accepted that the Wars of the Spanish and of the Austrian Succession, and the Seven Years' War, were, from the point of view of British history, mainly trade wars, signposts along the road of commercial and imperial development; though they were also defensive wars, necessitated by the French aim at world-supremacy. The war against the French revolutionary Government and Napoleon, though it added to the extent of the British Empire, was, according to the view here supported, in its inception and in its general character mainly a defensive war, directed against Napoleon's vast ambitions. Accordingly, at the Peace of Paris Great Britain found herself, for the time being, a 'satiated' State. A colonial empire was proving an expensive luxury, and though the cause of Free

Trade did not triumph till 1846, for many years business men, no less than theorists, were looking forward to a system under which commerce should no longer be shackled by the gyves of the old colonial system.<sup>1</sup>

In this state of things a new outlet was sought by the Time Spirit. It is true that the old rallying cry still held its ground, viz. the principle of the maintenance of treaty obligations ; but to the more adventurous minds of a new generation too often this meant the seeking the living among the dead. A new inspiration had to be found ; and, hesitatingly with Canning, in full swing with Palmerston and Russell, a new breeze swelled the sails of British foreign policy and led to new Eldorados. That breeze was the principle of nationality which aroused sympathy for its every manifestation, at least by thought and word, if not by action. We have seen the heartburnings thereby occasioned to Queen Victoria and Prince Albert ; but what was more operative in arresting, for the time being, the movement than the disapproval of crowned heads was the sorry figure cut by sentiment, unprepared for action, when it found itself confronted in 1863 and 1864 with the solid forces of militarism in Russia and Prussia.

It must not, however, be supposed that at any moment of time tendencies were ever at work in a single direction. The business of the historian must always be to survey a stream in which he has to note many cross currents. Thus, throughout the period of Palmerston's ascendancy, the Manchester school

<sup>1</sup> See 'Merchants' Petition of 1820,' Tooke, *History of Prices*, Appendix 1, pp. 331-44.

had its numerous and active supporters. Their views were expressed by Bright, when he said (October 29th, 1858) : ' The more you examine the matter, the more you will come to the conclusion . . . that the foreign policy, this " regard for the liberties of Europe," this care at one time for " the Protestant interests," this excessive love for the " balance of power," is neither more nor less than a gigantic system of outdoor relief for the aristocracy of Great Britain.' <sup>1</sup> The Manchester school, however, though they won popular approval by being the means through which was cheapened the people's bread, remained, it may be contended, in a backwater of English political thought. At a time when things were moving more and more in the direction of State interference and supervision; they were individualists, of a singularly crude and unattractive type. At a time when centripetal tendencies were already silently at work in the British Empire, no less than in Germany, their views on colonies were still based on Turgot and Joseph Hume. The combination of Quaker Christianity with capitalist worldliness had little to attract the English working-man, whose instinct is to return a blow with a blow, but who, on questions of money, is, so far as his own class is concerned, a genuine altruist. The Manchester School was, it seems, of importance not because of its direct influence upon politics, but because *indirectly* it undoubtedly influenced the views of men like Lord Stanley and Lord Granville.

Moreover, apart from such purely negative attitude, the tendencies at work were often, no doubt,

<sup>1</sup> *Speeches*, ed. by J. Thorold Rogers (Pop. Ed.), p. 470.



mixed and confused. Thus Palmerston was the main champion of the national idea ; but he was also a strong supporter of British imperial claims. The Crimean War was, according to the view here adopted, to a great extent, an accident, due to the Czar's misunderstanding of Lord Aberdeen and to the policy of drift on the part of British statesmen ; but, assuming that Palmerston was right in believing that Russia was aiming at an ascendancy in the Near East which threatened British interests in the Mediterranean and India, then the Crimean War can be justified as one waged on behalf of imperial interests. (It added, no doubt, to its popularity that to the average Englishman Russia represented the forces of darkness and reaction.)

In spite, however, of the complexity of the subject it remains true that at particular times particular tendencies are predominant. Thus when, as we have seen, the wave of enthusiasm for the national idea seemed for the moment to have spent itself, with the triumph of nationality in a singularly ominous shape within the new German Empire, henceforth a new tendency becomes very active, guiding the course of English history. Men began slowly, and often half-consciously, to realise that in the new Europe Great Britain could only hold her own if she spoke as the British Empire and not as a little island. We have here nothing to do with the movement which gradually, in the case of the self-governing colonies, converted a precarious ownership into an active partnership of free nations. So far as European politics were concerned, it was India and the position of India as a British possession that

dominated the situation. The whole story of our disputes and misunderstandings with Russia has its explanation in British fears of Russian intrigues and movements directed against India. (It was an accident that here again dislike of Russian autocracy reconciled many to an anti-Russian policy who would have recoiled from a policy which avowed itself purely self-interested.) Again, because Egypt was on the road to India, British statesmen were bound to recognise the special claims of Egypt upon their attention and care. If Tory imperialism first bought his shares in the Suez Canal Company from the Khedive, it was Liberals of the type of Lord Granville and Gladstone who found themselves compelled most reluctantly to maintain a virtual British Protectorate over Egypt. There is here no ground for party recriminations. Lord Salisbury, no less than Lord Granville, sought to shake himself free from what, at the time, seemed a Sindbad's burden. But since an Egypt secure from domestic or foreign intrigue was a necessity for British India, British statesmen proceeded, gloomily and reluctantly, with their inevitable task. We can gauge the strength of the tendency at work when we remember that it went on unchecked whilst Gladstone was supreme in domestic politics, a minister whose one article of faith, so far as foreign policy was concerned, was the principle of nationality, and by whom conscious imperialism was met with anathema.

We may dislike the word imperialism and yet recognise that the affairs of Great Britain abroad must inevitably gain in importance and volume. In these days of rapid communication by post and

telegraph, as well as by steamer and railroad, the unity of imperial interests is more and more brought home to our understanding. The conquest of Mesopotamia on behalf of India is as much a British interest as is the recovery of Antwerp on behalf of England. The subject is outside our range, but incidentally we may note that the general tendency, which for want of a better term we call imperialist, was the underlying cause which, apart from the case of Belgium, must eventually have brought about a collision between Germany and Great Britain, unless the latter was prepared to yield the pride of place to her younger and upstart rival. In saying this, we may none the less recognise that, in the eyes of the British democracy and of its leaders, it was the violation of Belgian neutrality that alone made the war of 1914 justifiable and, indeed, necessary. Happily for the interests, both of Great Britain and the world at large, we can hope and believe that whilst the wave of imperialist tendency has not spent its strength, it has joined its forces with that other wave of enthusiasm for the national idea, which at last may find its outcome in a new map of Europe.

## CHAPTER IX

### ENGLISH SEA-POWER IN ITS RELATION TO OTHER STATES

BUT, the Satan of the Book of Job may still suggest, granted that English policy on land has upon the whole been moderate and reasonable, may not this be because England has never been a great military state? If we turn to the element where she has for long been pre-eminent, the case is very different; and here we see the full measure of British *ὕβρις* and overbearingness.

Now, it is impossible to deny that sometimes Great Britain has used her power in such a way as to alarm and alienate Neutral States. Still there are numerous considerations to be carefully weighed before we need assume the white sheet. In the first place, we must remember the historical background from which British sea-power started. German writers seem to consider that the oceans of the world were peacefully open to the nations, till the selfishness and hostility of England stepped in and claimed a monopoly. In fact, at the time when English sea-power began its course, two nations claimed to possess the monopoly of both the Eastern and the Western seas. The same papal grant which

gave to Spain and Portugal the possession of the unknown land to the East and the West entitled them, it was maintained, to say 'hands off!' to every trespasser who should find himself on the waters which led to such territories. Grotius's treatise, *Mare Liberum*, was first written, it should be remembered, to vindicate the right of the Dutch to penetrate the Indian Seas. The English kings were content to claim 'sovereignty,' *dominium maris*, in the 'Narrow Seas' or *mare Britannicum*. This seems at first to have meant only the Channel, the narrow sea between England and France. It soon, however, became the accepted interpretation of English statesmen, jurists, and writers, that 'the Narrow Seas' meant the two seas between England and France, and England and the Netherlands.<sup>1</sup> Friction arose with the Dutch, who claimed the freedom of fishing on two grounds, (1) that of the privileges granted by ancient treaties still in force; (2) that of abstract right because the sea, like the air, is for the common use of all and cannot be private property. The weak point in the case lay in the fact that these two grounds, that of treaty right and that of the *Mare Liberum*, seemed to be in a certain sense contradictory. The English, however, would not admit that the question of the immemorial 'claims of the Kings of England to sovereignty and jurisdiction in the seas adjoining the British coasts was open to discussion, and, seizing upon the argument placed in their hands by the Dutch Memorandum itself, pleaded with great force that the granting of privileges implied the power

<sup>1</sup> *Anglo-Dutch Rivalry*, by G. Edmundson, Appendix B, p. 161

to take them away and modify them, should the King deem such a step necessary to protect the interests of his own subjects.' <sup>2</sup>

The judicious historian S. R. Gardiner treats with short shrift the extreme pretensions of James and Charles I. Selden's *Mare Clausum*, which was written as a counterblast to the work of Grotius, 'would meet,' he writes, 'with nothing but scorn and derision at the present day. Its very premisses would be contemptuously set aside. Selden did not trouble himself to inquire whether the authority which he claimed was in accordance with the well-understood interests of England itself, to say nothing of the interests of other nations. It was enough for him to flatter the vanity of his countrymen by a long and elaborate compilation of precedents exhibiting the rights claimed over the seas by early English Sovereigns.' Again: 'No doubt there was much that was fascinating in the splendid position which he (Charles) claimed amidst warring nations. As he kept the peace on land, so would he keep the peace at sea. All through the German Ocean, all through the English Channel, not a shell should be fired in anger. Merchants should ply hither and thither freely, unvexed by pirates, by blockading squadrons, or by inquisitorial searchers for contraband goods. All these belligerent rights which Charles had himself exercised so freely and so oppressively in the beginning of his reign were to be interdicted to the navies of Spain and France and of the Dutch Republic. He never thought of asking whether other Powers would willingly admit

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 28.

an authority so unlimited, any more than he thought of asking whether his subjects would willingly admit the authority which he claimed at home. It was for him to lay down the law, and for others to follow. He alone was disinterested, just and wise : all others were selfish, pugnacious and grasping.' <sup>1</sup>

The aberrations of Charles I., like the turpitude of his son, can hardly with justice be laid to the charge of the whole English nation. It must be noted, moreover, that the special circumstances, under which naval power took its rise, coloured greatly its whole subsequent history. On land, as the strong national state replaced feudal anarchy, a national army took the place of the feudal levies, the service being only for the particular campaign, and the human element, in the absence of an elaborate artillery, counting for much more in the proportional cost of military expenses than it costs in a modern army. On the sea, on the other hand, though crews might be obtained from the compulsory service of fishermen, the actual cost of building ships was too great for the state, in the absence of a proper system of taxation, to undertake a navy, except on a small scale ; so that private initiative came to the rescue of the public weakness and inefficiency. The English fleet that, aided by the weather, routed the Armada, was a fleet largely composed of vessels belonging to private owners. But, obviously, private owners could not exist unless they could obtain some return for their outlay. That return was obtained by preying upon the enemy's commerce, the very word 'privateer'

<sup>1</sup> *History of England*, 1603-42, vol. viii. p. 155.

taking us back to a time when private war by sea was the rule, not the exception. All rules, then, with regard to naval warfare took their start under conditions in which the idea of a monopoly of particular seas was only gradually dying out, and in which the main objective of naval warfare was the destruction or pillage of enemy goods and commerce. Even now the recognition by International Law, under certain conditions, of private war by sea, suggests how different has been the historical evolution at sea from that which has taken place on land. For years, it may be said without exaggeration, the state of things in the Eastern and the Western Seas was one of uninterrupted war. Hence the necessity of those powerful corporations, such as the English and, above all, the Dutch East India Company, which were both associations for trading purposes, and naval and military organisations, able to hold their own in the struggle for life. Even when the notion of neutrality emerged in the case of contending belligerents, the circumstances were not such as to lend it much importance. In the wars which culminated in the Peace of Paris, 1763, the naval Powers, speaking generally, were for the most part grouped with either England or France.

The rights of neutrals first became a practical subject of dispute in the war of American Independence. 'The claim of England to seize enemy's goods in neutral ships bore hard upon neutral Powers, and especially upon those of the Baltic, and upon Holland, into whose hands and those of the Austrian Netherlands the war had thrown much of the European carrying trade ; while the products of the



Baltic, naval stores and grain, were those which England was particularly interested in forbidding to her enemies.' <sup>1</sup>

In this state of things the neutral Powers, Russia, Sweden and Denmark, determined to assert their rights ; and, under the lead of Russia, proclaimed the ' Armed Neutrality ' of 1780. The declaration of the Empress of Russia, which formed its basis, announced the following principles :

Article I. That all neutral vessels ought to navigate freely from one port to another, as well as upon the coasts of the Powers now at war.

Article II. That the effects belonging to the subjects of the belligerent Powers shall be free in neutral ships, excepting always contraband goods.

Article III. That Her Imperial Majesty, in consequence of the limits above fixed, will adhere strictly to that which is stipulated by the 10th and 11th articles of her Treaty of Commerce with England, concerning the manner in which she ought to conduct towards all the belligerent Powers.

Article IV. That as to what concerns a port blocked up, we ought not, in truth, to consider as such any but those which are found so well shut up by a fixed or sufficient number of vessels belonging to the Power which attacks it, that no one can attempt to enter into such port without evident danger.

<sup>1</sup> *Influence of Sea-Power upon History*, by Capt. Mahan, p. 405.

Article V. That these principles above laid down ought to serve as a rule in all proceedings, whenever there is a question concerning the legality of prizes.<sup>1</sup>

The first article, in effect, declared that neutral vessels had a right to maintain the coasting trade of a belligerent.

The second enunciated the now familiar doctrine, 'free, *i.e.* neutral, ships, free goods.'

Under a treaty between Great Britain and Russia provisions and horses were excluded from the list of contraband goods, but the treaty of 1766 is silent with regard to the character of naval stores. Still one effect of the third article was to maintain that no articles were contraband except arms, equipments and munitions of war. This ruled out naval stores and provisions, unless belonging to the Government of a belligerent.

Apart from the undertakings of treaties, the common sense of the law of contraband had been long ago asserted by Grotius. He placed all commodities under three heads. Some were of use in war alone, for instance, arms. With regard to these, there could be no controversy. Some were useless for purposes of war, serving only for purposes of luxury. The rule with regard to these was equally obvious. Others are of use both in peace and in war; for instance, money, provisions, ships and articles of naval equipment. With regard to this category the state of the war must be considered.

<sup>1</sup> *History and Digest of the International Arbitrations to which the United States has been a Party*, by J. B. Moore, vol. ii. p. 993, note.

'If seizure is necessary for defence, the necessity confers a right of arresting the goods, under the condition, however, that they shall be restored unless some sufficient reason interferes.' 'The practice of different nations,' Mr. Hall writes, 'has been generally determined by their maritime strength, and by the degree of convenience which they have found in multiplying articles the free importation of which they have desired to secure for themselves or to deny to their enemy. Frequently they have endeavoured by their treaties to secure immunity for their own commerce, when neutral, and have extended the list of prohibited objects by Proclamation so soon as they became belligerent.'<sup>1</sup>

Vattel enunciates as contraband 'arms and munitions of war, timber and everything which serves for the construction and armament of vessels of war, horses, and even provisions, *on certain occasions, when there is hope of reducing the enemy by famine.*'

'It is evident,' writes Captain Mahan, 'that no great maritime state, situated as England then was, could submit' to the provisions regarding the coasting trade and contraband 'as a matter of right.'<sup>2</sup> 'It is usual,' writes Mr. Hall, 'for foreign publicists to treat the formation of the Armed Neutrality as a generous effort to bridle the aggressions of England, and as investing the principles expressed in the Russian declaration with the authority of such doctrines as are accepted by the body of civilised nations. It is unnecessary to enter into the motives which actuated the Russian Government; but it

<sup>1</sup> *International Law*, by W. E. Hall, 5th ed. p. 641.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 406.

is impossible to admit that the doctrines which it put forward received any higher sanction at the time than such as could be imparted by an agreement between the Baltic Powers. The accession of France, Spain, Holland and the United States was an act of hostility directed against England, with which they were then at war, and valueless as indicating their settled policy, and still more valueless as manifesting their views of existing international right.' 'All the signatories to the Declaration of the Armed Neutrality violated one or other of its provisions when they were themselves next at war.' 'Whatever authority the principles of the Armed Neutrality possess, they have since acquired by inspiring to a certain but varying extent the policy of France, the United States, Russia and the minor Powers.'<sup>1</sup>

In this connexion we may note that, according to Harris, the Russian admiral Greig, 'as soon as he read the declaration and saw the grounds on which the instructions were to be made, collected the various sentences which had been pronounced during the last war in the Archipelago by the Russian tribunal, instituted for that purpose, and at which he frequently presided, on neutral ships. After proving in the clearest manner that they confiscated and condemned Turkish property wherever they found it, and that the only prizes they made were such property on board neutral ships, he gave in the whole to Count Czernicheff, signifying that, as a faithful and affectionate servant of the Empress, he thought himself obliged to set before her eyes that, if she carried her present measures into execution, she would act in direct contra-

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.* pp. 647-8.

diction to herself. . . . He assured me, and he spoke in the name of all his countrymen, that if ever the Empress should require of them to serve in a manner hostile to us, they would, to a man, quit her service.' <sup>1</sup>

The 'Armed Neutrality' was directed against England, not because her conduct had been different from what might have been expected, but because the omens seemed to point to the breaking up of the haughty Island Power; and the other nations, not unnaturally, desired to wreak their vengeance on its self-confident arrogance.

In truth, it was not England alone which was the sinner; though, because of her opportunities, she excited the bitterest animosity. In all naval wars we find the same exorbitant pretensions on the part of the belligerent Powers to regulate and control the trade of neutrals. Thus, in the war of the French Revolution we find that, by a Decree of the National Convention of May 9, 1793, the commanders of French ships of war and privateers were 'authorised to seize and carry into the ports of the Republic merchant vessels which are wholly or in part laden with provisions, being neutral property, bound to an enemy's port, or having on board merchandise belonging to an enemy.' Merchandise belonging to the enemy was declared to be 'lawful prize, seizable for the profit of the captor.' Provisions, if belonging to a neutral, were to be paid for at the price they would have otherwise obtained, and neutral vessels were to be released when their cargoes had been dealt with.

<sup>1</sup> *Diaries and Correspondence of the 1st Earl of Malmesbury*, vol. i. pp. 306-7.

It is true that American vessels were excepted from these conditions. But on what grounds? Because of the thorough confidence felt by the French Republic 'that the Americans would not abuse this privilege by carrying to her enemies those productions by which they ought to assist in the defence of a cause as much their own as hers.' The French minister had been 'informed that the English Government have declared their determination to carry into the English ports all the American vessels laden with provisions for the ports of France.' The French Republic expected that the United States would 'hasten to take the most energetic measures to procure a recall of this decision; or, if the measures taken should prove to be "insufficient or fruitless" and the neutrality of the United States "serviceable only to the enemies of France," France would exercise a very natural right in taking measures to prevent a consequence so injurious to her.'<sup>1</sup>

The British Government sought to justify the Order in Council of June 8, 1793, which proclaimed a similar procedure, on the ground that by the 'law of nations all provisions were to be considered as contraband, and as such liable to confiscation in the case when "the depriving of an enemy of their supplies is one of the means intended to be employed in reducing him to reasonable terms of peace." The actual situation is notoriously such as to lead to the employing this mode of distressing her by the joint operation of the different Powers engaged in the war, and the reasoning . . . which applied to *all* cases

<sup>1</sup> Moore, *op. cit.* pp. 299-300.

of this sort is certainly much more applicable to the *present* case, in which the case results from the unusual mode of war, employed by the enemy himself, in having armed almost the whole labouring class of the French nation, for the purpose of *commencing* and supporting hostilities against all the Governments of Europe ; but this reasoning is most of all applicable to the circumstances of trade, which is now in a great measure entirely carried on by the actually ruling party of France itself, and which is therefore no longer to be regarded as a mercantile speculation of individuals, but as an immediate operation of the very persons who have declared war, and are now carrying it on against Great Britain.' <sup>1</sup>

Jefferson, on the other hand, maintained that the position that provisions were contraband 'in the case where the depriving the enemy of these supplies is one of the means *intended to be employed* for reducing him to reasonable terms of peace,' or in any case but that of a place actually blockaded, was 'entirely new'; that reason and usage had established 'that when two nations go to war, those who choose to live in peace retain their natural right to pursue their agriculture, manufactures or other ordinary vocations ; to carry the produce of their industry, for exchange, to all nations, belligerents or neutral, as usual ; to go and come freely, without injury or molestation ; and, in short, that the war among others shall be, for them, as if it did not exist.' To these mutual rights nations had

<sup>1</sup> Dispatch of Mr. Hammond, Sept. 12, 1793, quoted *ibid.* pp. 301-2.

allowed one exception—that of furnishing implements of war to the belligerents, or anything whatever to a blockaded place. Corn, flour and meal were not of the class of contraband, and consequently remained articles of free commerce. The state of war between Great Britain and France furnished neither belligerent with the right to interrupt the agriculture of the United States, or the peaceable exchange of its produce with all nations. Such an act of interference tended directly to draw the United States from the state of peace in which they wished to remain. If the United States permitted corn to be sent to Great Britain and her friends, and refused it to France, such an act of partiality might lead to war with the latter Power. If they withheld supplies of provisions from France, they should in like manner be bound to withhold them from her enemies also, and thus to close to themselves all the ports of Europe where corn was in demand, or else make themselves a party to the war. This was a dilemma into which no pretext for forcing the United States could be found. Great Britain might indeed ‘feel the desire of starving an enemy nation; but she could have no right of doing it at our loss, nor of making us the instrument of it.’<sup>1</sup>

A further Order in Council, giving effect to the rule of the war of 1756, forbidding all trade to neutrals in time of war that was not open to them in times of peace, was afterwards limited so as to permit the importation of the produce of the French West India Islands into the United States, and its exportation from thence to European ports.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 302-3.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 304-6.



It was recognised that some of the enactments of this Order in Council were of too strong a character, and they were modified. After Jay's Treaty an Anglo-American Commission was instituted to give compensation to those who had been unfairly treated under it. Still, no doubt, John Quincy Adams' remark 'that the maritime law of nations recognised in Great Britain is all comprised in one line of a popular song, "Rule Britannia! Britannia rules the Waves!"'<sup>1</sup> represented the general feeling of neutrals with regard to British sea-power.

The only plea that can be made in abatement is that the practice of other nations when they had the opportunity was just as overbearing. The American Secretary of State wrote in May, 1798: 'However much reason the Neutral Nations have to complain of her (Great Britain's) measures, the little finger of France in Maritime depredations is thicker than the loins of Britain, and the safety of the portion of the civilised world, not yet subjugated by France, greatly depends on the barrier opposed to her boundless ambition and rapacity by the navy of England. If this navy were crushed or subjected to the power of France, she would instantly become the tyrant of the sea, as she is already of the European continent. At present her rapacity is confined by the inferiority of her naval force, which therefore exerts itself chiefly in acts of piracy on neutral commerce. But were the English navy subdued, France would

<sup>1</sup> *The Writings of John Quincy Adams*, vol. ii. p. 33. Adams was successively Minister at the Hague, Berlin, and St. Petersburg.

insultingly prescribe law to the whole maritime world.' <sup>1</sup> Of a truth may we say,

‘Mutato nomine de te  
fabula narratur.’

✓In 1801 a second Armed Neutrality, consisting of Russia, Prussia, Sweden and Denmark, was formed, in J. Q. Adams's words, ‘to avenge the violence and injustice they had suffered from her (Great Britain's) navy, to secure some respect for their flags for the future, and to curb that supremacy upon the seas which, it must be acknowledged, she enjoys, not with the most exemplary moderation.’ <sup>2</sup> At the same time he recognised that the principles of the Armed Neutrality counted for little with the leading members of it, Russia and Prussia. Beaten at sea, they might connect themselves, the one with Constantinople, the other with Hanover. It was Sweden and Denmark, who had been coaxed and dragged and pushed into the measure, who would pay for it at a tremendous cost.

‘When this plan of a new armed neutrality,’ Adams wrote, January 27, 1801, ‘was first in agitation, I was inclined to think we might take a part in it as far as could be consistent with our engagements, and so wrote home. The principles are more liberal than those of England, and, if generally adopted, would prove a real benefit to humanity. But from the moment when the drift of the two *Great* parties to this league was evident, I have been convinced that our policy is to have nothing to do with it.’ <sup>3</sup> His conclusion was: ‘England has not enjoyed her naval superiority with moderation. And the others

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 259.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 492.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 496-7.

nate her at once for her prosperity and her elation under it. To indulge their passions they are all running to their ruin, while the Frenchman claps his wings and crows.' <sup>1</sup>

Very suggestive are Adams's reasons for opposing the entrance of the United States into the Armed Neutrality. 'It would not be just, because the Government of the United States have long since declared their opinion, that by the law of Nations, independent of the stipulations of treaties, an enemy's cargo cannot be protected by a neutral bottom; and though always anxious to establish the contrary by voluntary agreement, they have ever disavowed all pretence of a right to force its adoption upon other Powers, and by the positive engagement of a treaty are bound to acquiesce in the practice of the rule as it originally stood. It is true that Sweden and Denmark are bound by the stipulations of their treaties with England in the same manner, nor do I know upon what grounds those Powers can reconcile their ancient with their modern stipulations. But, even if the question was considered as doubtful, the fundamental principles of this League seem unjust; it has itself the radical defect against which it proposes to contend. It assumes a right of legislation upon the sea. It is an enactment by the nations of laws upon objects of common concern to all, with a declaration that, if other nations will not consent to them peaceably, they shall be forced upon them at the mouth of the cannon. It is impossible to assume the supremacy of the seas more

<sup>1</sup> *The Writings of John Quincy Adams*, vol. ii. p. 499.

plainly and arrogantly than this. The inconsistency of the League with the liberty which it proposes to support is striking in the very expression of the third article. The two Sovereigns say that to prevent the liberty of trade and navigation from depending upon *arbitrary construction*, dictated by a partial and momentary interest, they *understand and will* (what else is that but that arbitrary construction?) that in time of war all neutral ships shall neutralise all property on board, except a specific list of contraband. It is well known that this idea of being the legislatrix of the ocean and giving the world a code of naval laws was the lure of flattery by which the Empress Catherine was first drawn into the original Armed Neutrality, the nature and tendency of which she so little understood that she thought it pointed against Spain and to the advantage of England.' <sup>1</sup>

Hard as had been from the first the position of neutrals in the War of the Revolution, it became much harder after the brief respite of the Peace of Amiens. Between the shock of Napoleon's continental system, which was based on the idea of subjugating England by destroying her commerce, and the British Orders in Council, the aim of which was to prevent neutral commerce from contributing to the support of the enemy, neutral nations found themselves between the hammer and the anvil.

In reply to a blockade declared by Great Britain of the Continental coast from the Elbe to the port of Brest (afterwards slightly modified), Napoleon on November 21, 1806, issued the famous Berlin Decree

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 503-4.

which proclaimed that its provisions would 'continue to be looked upon as embodying the fundamental principles of the Empire,' until England should return to the observance of the law of nations on land and sea. The preamble asserted that England did not recognise the law of nations ; that she made prisoners of war of non-combatants and confiscated private property ; that she declared places in a state of blockade before which she had not even a single ship of war, and assumed to extend the right of blockade to entire coasts and the whole Empire ; that the object of these measures was to raise the commerce and industry of England upon the ruins of that of the Continent ; and consequently, that whoever dealt on the Continent in English goods rendered himself an accomplice of her 'designs. To oppose an enemy with such arms as he made use of was a natural right ; and it was therefore decreed :

1. That the British Isles were in a state of blockade.
2. That all commerce and all correspondence with them was prohibited.
3. That every English subject found in the countries occupied by French troops or by those of her Allies should be made a prisoner of war.
4. That all property or merchandise belonging to British subjects should be regarded as lawful prize.
5. That all trade in English goods was forbidden, and that all merchandise belonging to England, or coming from her factories or her colonies, was lawful prize.

6. That half the product of confiscation under the preceding articles should go to indemnify merchants for losses suffered by the capture of their merchant vessels by British cruisers.
7. That no vessel coming directly from England or the English colonies, or which should have been there since the publication of the Decree, should be received in any port.
8. That any vessel contravening the preceding provision by a false certificate should be seized, and the vessel and cargo confiscated as if they were English property.<sup>1</sup>

‘To the imperial measures the British Government quickly responded. On January 7, 1807, Lord Howick issued an Order in Council by which Neutral vessels were forbidden to trade from one port to another, both of which were in the possession or control of France or her Allies. On the 11th of November further Orders were issued. These Orders, which were issued on the advice of Spencer Percival and George Canning, and against the remonstrance of Lord Bathurst, President of the Board of Trade, prohibited neutral vessels from trading with the ports of France and her Allies, and with all ports in Europe from which, though they were not at war with His Britannic Majesty, the British flag was excluded, unless such vessels should clear from a British port under regulations to be prescribed in the future. By these Orders the ships were required to import their cargoes into England

<sup>1</sup> Moore, *op. cit.* pp. 4447-8.

subject to the laws regulating the payment of customs, and thus to carry on their commerce by way of England.

On the 17th December, 1807, Napoleon issued at Milan, in retaliation for the British Order in Council of the 11th of the preceding November, a decree by which he declared :

1. That every ship that had submitted to be searched by an English ship or had consented to a voyage to England, or had paid any tax to the English Government, was *ipso facto* denationalised and was to be deemed good prize.
2. That the British Isles were in a state of blockade, and that every ship that should sail from or be destined to a port in Great Britain or the British possessions, or in any country occupied by the British troops, should be good prize.<sup>1</sup>

As Jefferson ruefully explained to Congress, the various Decrees and Orders in Council practically amounted 'to a declaration that every vessel found on the high seas, whatsoever be her cargo, and whatsoever foreign port be that of her departure or destination, shall be deemed lawful prize.' The only remedy lay in the embargo on ships in American ports which had been enacted in December, 1807, by which American vessels, seamen and property were retained within American harbours, until the dangers to which they were exposed could be removed or lessened.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Moore, *op. cit.*, p. 4450.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 4451.

' When this Act took effect, many American vessels were in foreign seas, and it was notorious that they subsequently remained abroad in order to escape the operation of the embargo. Nevertheless, Napoleon, exhaustless in resources, saw in the Act a new opportunity. Up to this time the measures of the belligerents had applied equally to all neutral vessels. Napoleon now struck a blow at American commerce alone. By an Edict of April 17, 1808, commonly known as the Bayonne Decree, he ordered the seizure of all American vessels which should enter the ports of France, Italy, or the Hanse Towns. This measure he justified on the ingenious pretence that, since the laying of the embargo in the United States, no American vessel could navigate the seas without violating the laws of its own country, and thus furnishing a presumption that it was doing so on British account or in British connection.

' By an Act of Congress of March 1, 1809, the embargo was repealed, and a policy of non-intercourse as to Great Britain and France was substituted for it. By this Act public ships of these countries were forbidden to enter the ports of the United States; and their merchant vessels were forbidden to enter, on penalty of forfeiture, after the 20th of the following May. From and after the same date the importation of merchandise from British and French ports was forbidden. The President was authorised by proclamation to suspend these prohibitions in respect of either nation, in case it should revoke or modify its Orders or Decrees so that they should cease to violate the neutral commerce of the United States. This Act was to remain in force only to the end of



the next session of Congress. It was continued in force by the Act of June 28, 1809.' <sup>1</sup>

Napoleon's reply to this Act was to seize American vessels in the ports of Holland, Spain, Italy and Naples. The Rambouillet Decree, dated March 23, 1810, ordered that all American vessels entering any port in France or her colonies or in any country occupied by the French arms after the coming into force of the Non-intercourse Act should be seized and sold.<sup>2</sup>

The reported revocation by Napoleon of the French Decrees was one of the main causes of the war with England of 1812. Two years later, A. Gallatin, while Minister to France, discovered a secret Decree dated August 5, 1810, the same day that the Duke of Cadore wrote, promising the revocation of the former Decrees. Of this secret Decree, Gallatin said: 'It is not a condemnation either in form or in substance; but it certainly announces the intention to condemn. It bears date on the very day on which it was officially communicated to our Minister that the Berlin and Milan Decrees would be revoked on the 1st day of the coming November, and no one can suppose that, if it had been communicated or published at the same time, the United States would, with respect to the promised revocation of the Berlin and Milan Decrees, have taken that ground which ultimately led to war with Great Britain. It is indeed unnecessary to comment on such a glaring act of combined injustice, bad faith and meanness, as the enactment and concealment of that Decree exhibits.'<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Moore, *op. cit.* p. 4552.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 4453.

<sup>3</sup> *Writings of Gallatin*, ed. by H. Adams, vol. ii. p. 196.

The late Mr. G. T. Warner propounded in *Blackwood's Magazine*<sup>1</sup> the gloomy view that, as it took nearly twenty years for American commercial grievances in the Napoleonic war to issue in war between England and America, so the constant frictions in the war of 1914 between belligerent and neutral interests might finally end in the same manner. The facts, however, hardly pointed in this direction. In the first place, in the years before the war of 1812 the great grievance which counted for much more than the interference with American commerce was the question of impressment. There were numerous desertions from British ships ; and the British claim to search American ships indiscriminately for such runaways was felt as a direct blow in the face by thousands of Americans. That trade grievances did not count so much in precipitating the war, as is generally believed, is suggested by the following considerations. The New England States were pre-eminently the centre of shipping and overseas trade interests. It was they which had resented most bitterly the interference with them caused by the embargo and Non-intercourse Acts ; and it was they which might have been expected to suffer the most from the action taken by the British navy. And yet it was in these States that the feeling against the war of 1812 was the strongest. They refused to allow their militia to be employed ; and, for a moment, it seemed as though New England was prepared to go the length of separation, in its hostility to the policy of the dominant party. Moreover, if the cause of the war was only the Orders in Council,

<sup>1</sup> August, 1916, pp. 230-41.

why did it not come to an end with their revocation ? The truth was, that from the first there had been an active and numerous party that sympathised with the French cause, as representing democratic ideas. The prestige of Washington and the truculent folly of the French agents, Genet and Adet, for a time kept this party in check, and, when it gained the day with the presidency of Jefferson, the pacific character of Jefferson himself, and the manner in which the French sought to out-Herod the most aggressive performances of British 'navalism,' kept the United States neutral. But when a weaker man succeeded Jefferson, and when the French seemed, at last, inclined to mend their ways, the stream of national policy poured its waters into the channel that had been long prepared for it. From many points of view France might have seemed to the United States its natural ally. It speaks volumes for the antagonism created by French methods that, when the war with England at last broke out, the Americans did not term themselves the allies of the French.

It has been only necessary to speak of the United States, because, during the long years of the Napoleonic War, the whole of Europe became engulfed in its maelström, so that in the case of European nations neutrality became practically impossible.

Great Britain was fighting with her back to the wall, and often against terrible odds. In these circumstances she had no intention to let go a single weapon that might be of use to her in the long-drawn conflict. The British case was well put in the *Annual Register* of 1801, 'No politician thinks it

worth while to oppose ethics, or religion herself, to the partitioning plans of France, Prussia, Austria and Russia. If murmurs against violence and usurpation are heard for a time, they soon subside into a tacit acknowledgment of the right acquired by possession. Yet attempts are constantly made to convince the world that it is immoral in any great naval Power not to relinquish the advantages she derives from her maritime supremacy in favour of her enemies. All land rights are obtained by conquest ; usurpations are legalised by time ; property grows out of possession. Rivers, lakes, mountains, deserts and other natural boundaries define and ascertain, in the imaginations of many, a right of dominion in those who are able to bear rule in the enclosed regions. Because the main ocean is not interjected by natural barriers, and dotted with forts, but, like the air we breathe, one continuous expanse, it is imagined that the law of force and occupancy, which does everything on land, should do nothing at sea. But the law of *major vis*, if it is tolerated in one case, should be equally tolerated in the other. The only difference is that the fortified places—fortified whether by nature or art—that confer continental dominion are of a fixed, whereas the fleets and navies of a great and preponderating maritime state are of a movable nature. In the present state of the world, which is in truth little better than a state of war, the conduct of Governments cannot be squared in every instance by metaphysical accuracy. Great indulgence must be, and indeed is, given to measures of state, in the mutual transactions of nations. Nor are there many among

these that admit of so fair an apology as the right of visiting and searching the vessels of Neutral Powers, claimed and maintained by the English.' <sup>1</sup> The British Government, at least, had no doubts that the objects of the Armed Neutrality, whether in 1780 or in 1801, were in fact 'nothing less than to place themselves in a situation to maintain by force pretensions which are so obviously inconsistent with the principles of justice that those Powers which when neutral brought them forward were the first to oppose them when they became belligerent, and the establishment of which, if it should be effected, would be one of the principal means of overthrowing the strength and security of the British Empire. On the knowledge of these circumstances His Majesty the King would act contrary to the interests of his people, the dignity of his crown, and the honour of his flag . . . were he to delay the adoption of the most effectual measures to repel the attack he has already experienced and to oppose the hostile effects of the Confederacy armed against her.' <sup>2</sup>

With regard to this subject, the last word, in the absence of an International Court of Appeal, with power to enforce its decisions, has probably been said by the great writer, who first brought home to the ordinary reader the doctrine of sea-power, himself a patriotic American, and, as such, not unduly prejudiced in favour of Britain.

'As regards the rightfulness of the action of the two parties viewed separately from their policy,

<sup>1</sup> *Annual Register*, 1801, pp. 89-90.

<sup>2</sup> Note of Lord Grenville (Jan. 15, 1801) to the Danish and Swedish ambassadors. *Ibid.* p. 234.

opinions probably will always differ, according to the authority attributed by individuals to the *data* of international law. It may be admitted at once, that neither Napoleon's Decrees nor the British Orders can be justified at that bar, except by the simple plea of self-preservation,—the first law of States even more than of men ; for no Government is empowered to assent to that last sacrifice, which the individual may make for the noblest motives. The beneficent influence of the mass of conventions known as International Law is indisputable, nor should its authority be lightly undermined ; but it cannot prevent the interests of belligerents and neutrals from clashing, nor speak with perfect clearness in all cases where they do. Of this the rule of 1756 offered, in its day, a conspicuous instance. The belligerent claimed that the neutral, by covering with his flag a trade previously the monopoly of the enemy, not only inflicted a grave injury by snatching from him a lawful prey, but was guilty likewise of a breach of neutrality ; the neutral contended that the enemy had a right to change his commercial regulations, in war as well as in peace. To the author, though an American, the belligerent argument seems the stronger ; nor was the laudable desire of the neutral for gain a nobler motive than the solicitude about their national resources of men, who rightly believed themselves engaged in a struggle for national existence. The measure meted out to Austria and Prussia was an ominous indication of the fate Great Britain might expect if her strength failed her. But, whatever the decision of our older and milder civilisation on the merits of

the particular question, there can be no doubt of the passionate earnestness of the two disputants in their day, nor of the conviction of right held by either. In such a dilemma, the best answer of International Law has to be that every State is the final judge as to whether it should or should not make War; to its own self alone is it responsible for the rightfulness of this action. If, however, the conditions of injury entailed by the neutral's course is such as to justify war, it justifies all lesser means of control. The question of the rightfulness of these disappears, and that of policy alone remains.

‘It is the business of the neutral, by his prepared condition, to make impolitic that which he claims is also wrong. The neutral which fails to do so, which leaves its ports defenceless and its navy stinted until the emergency comes, will then find, as the United States found in the early years of this century, an admirable opportunity to write State Papers.’<sup>1</sup>

No doubt the action of the British ships was not a little galling to neutral Powers. To be held up and searched is never a pleasant experience; though it must be remembered that life was seldom endangered, as it is to-day, by the action of German submarines. Moreover the ‘right of search’ is indispensable for the carrying on of naval warfare, and has always been so recognised. The general feeling of Europe was expressed by the Prussian statesman Haugwitz, who said that the sea dominion

<sup>1</sup> *Influence of Sea-power on the French Revolution and Empire*, vol. ii. pp. 356-7.

of Great Britain was a hard thing to bear, but that the land dominion of Napoleon was a harder.

Such being the action of British sea-power in time of war, what was its record in time of peace? And here we may justly put forward the claim that in the years of peace that power was used indefatigably to put an end to that blot upon civilisation, the Slave Trade. It is, we must confess, true that no country in the past had profited more by the Slave Trade. It is melancholy to reflect that great sailors, like Lord St. Vincent and Nelson, honestly believed that the continuance of the Slave Trade was bound up with the supremacy of the British Navy. But for nations, no less than for individuals, there is surely room for repentance; and it is undoubtedly the fact that, when, by the Act of 1807, the plunge had been made, Great Britain threw herself eagerly into the work of abolishing the Slave Trade, without any feelings of regret for its past advantages.

It must be remembered that the power afterwards exerted by philanthropic bodies in England had already begun to show itself in the beginning of the nineteenth century. Those who are familiar with colonial history will know how in the second quarter of the century the course of British rule in South Africa was dictated by the Missionary Societies; and it was eager as well as able philanthropists who, from official positions, directed the policy of the country in the West Indies with regard to slaves and slavery. But even at an earlier date men like Wilberforce exercised a great influence over British policy; and no one can read the corre-



spondence of, statesmen such as Castlereagh and the Duke of Wellington, assuredly not men of the type of the ordinary philanthropist, without recognising the power of the new modes of thought that were permeating the British middle classes.<sup>1</sup> It was in this atmosphere of genuine repentance for past misdoings, which it would be stupid as well as wicked to call hypocritical, that the solemn declaration relative to the Slave Trade was signed at Vienna, February 8, 1815, by the Plenipotentiaries who signed the treaty of Paris of May 3, 1814. Probably many of the signatures were appended as a compliment to Great Britain, without much attention to the matter. Still the wording of this document is none the less impressive and significant. 'The Plenipotentiaries assembled at this Congress,' it was said, 'cannot better honour their mission, fulfil their duty and manifest the principles which guide their august sovereigns, than by labouring to realize this engagement (to put down the Trade), and by proclaiming in the name of their sovereigns the desire to put an end to a scourge which has so long desolated Africa, degraded Europe, and afflicted humanity.'

'The said Plenipotentiaries have agreed to open their deliberations as to the means of accomplishing so salutary an object by a solemn declaration of the principles which have guided them in this work.'

'Fully authorized to such an act, by the unanimous adherence of their respective courts to the

<sup>1</sup> Thus we find Castlereagh proposing (1814) that Trinidad should be given to France on condition that the French would put down the Slave Trade. (*Correspondence, Despatches, etc.*, vol. x. p. 132.)

principles announced in the said separate articles of the Treaty of Paris, they in consequence declare, in the face of Europe, that looking upon the universal abolition of the Slave Trade as a measure particularly worthy of their attention, conformable to the spirit of the age, and to the general principles of their august sovereigns, they are animated with a sincere desire to concur, by every means in their power, in the most prompt and effectual execution of this measure, and to act in the employment of those means with all the zeal and all the perseverance which so great and good a cause merits.

‘Too well informed of the sentiments of their sovereigns not to foresee, that, however honourable may be their object, they would not pursue it without a just regard to the interests, the habits and even the prejudices of their subjects, the said Plenipotentiaries at the same time acknowledge that this general declaration should not prejudge the period which each particular Power should look upon as expedient for the definitive abolition of the traffic in slaves. Consequently the determination of the period, when this traffic ought universally to cease, will be an object of negotiation between the different Powers ; it being, however, well understood that no means proper to ensure and accelerate its progress shall be neglected ; and that the reciprocal engagement contracted by the present declaration between the sovereigns who have taken part in it, should not be considered as fulfilled until the moment when complete success shall have crowned their united efforts.

‘In making the declaration known to Europe,

and to all the civilised nations of the earth, the said Plenipotentiaries flatter themselves they shall engage all other Governments, and particularly those who, in abolishing the traffic in slaves, have already manifested the same sentiments, to support them with their suffrage in a cause of which the final triumph will be one of the greatest monuments of the age which undertook it, and which shall have gloriously carried it into complete effect.' <sup>1</sup>

So far as legislation was concerned, the result obtained was not unsatisfactory. In 1819 Wilberforce was able to say that 'there was now but one single power, Portugal, which had not declared the Slave Trade a mass of injustice and cruelty, and fixed a definite time for its termination. Spain had abolished it absolutely to the north of the line, and fixed a period for its abolition to the south of it.'

There was unfortunately another side to the shield; and Wilberforce had to confess that 'notwithstanding the laws passed in several countries for its abolition, it was still carried on; it had been found impossible to sweep away at once that incurable race of free-booters who infested Africa. The persons carrying on the trade were of all nations, English, Dutch, French, Spanish, Portuguese and Americans.'<sup>2</sup> A system of international police, however, had been recently adopted, the main instrument of which was the British Navy, so as to put an end to the nuisance. It is significant that the two Powers, next to Great Britain in maritime strength, stood out from this agreement;

<sup>1</sup> *Annual Register*, 1815, pp. 358-60.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 1819, pp. 85-6.

while not themselves taking adequate measures for rendering effectual the abolition of the trade. Wilberforce seemed to think that this conduct was due to tenderness for the Slave Trade; but the main motive at work was undoubtedly jealousy of the British Navy. The French at any rate were not inclined to encourage the continuance of the trade on its merits. With regard to the Americans, the United States had the glory of having been the first among the Powers of the world to enact its abolition. It is true that at the time the feeling against slavery in general was much stronger in the south, when men like Jefferson influenced thought, than it became later under the pressure of the economic demands of the Cotton States. Still, at the time in which Wilberforce spoke, the Congress had passed a law appointing a large naval force, and giving a bounty for bringing in ships engaged in the trade. The reason why the United States had held aloof from international agreements was that they distrusted the right of search as exercised by English ships against America; but without such right it was impossible to make effective any such agreement.

At the Congress of Verona, 1823, the Duke of Wellington solemnly appealed to the Concert of Europe to put pressure to bear upon France to fall in line with the other European Powers. He had the means of proving that the traffic since 1815 had been and was carried on to a greater extent than formerly. In seven months of the year 1821 not less than 38,000 human beings had been carried off from the coast of Africa into slavery. The traffic did

not assume the usual secrecy of a contraband trade, but was carried on generally under the protection of the flag of France ; for the obvious reason that France was the only one of the great maritime European Powers which had not entered into international agreements for giving a limited power of search and capture of ships engaged in the Slave Trade. The reply of the French Government was not encouraging. 'The French Constitution,' it was said, 'abolishes confiscation. With regard to the right of search, if the French Government could ever consent to it, it would have the most disastrous consequences. The national character of the two peoples, French and English, forbids it ; and if proofs were necessary to support this opinion, it would suffice to call to mind that even in this year, in profound peace, French blood has flowed on the coasts of Africa. France acknowledges the liberty of the seas to all foreign flags, to whatever legitimate power they may belong. She only demands for herself that independence which she respects in others and which belongs to her own dignity.' <sup>1</sup>

The other Powers were at the time not inclined to give offence to France, on behalf of liberal and recalcitrant England ; though the humanitarian disposition of Alexander caused Russia's reply to be much more sympathetic in tone than that of Austria or Prussia.

Well might the African Institution bitterly express their disappointment at the result of these Conferences. 'The prospect of a total suppression of the increased and increasing horrors of that odious

<sup>1</sup> *Annual Register*, 1823, pp. 80\*-84\*.

traffic seems indeed more distant than ever.' With regard to the French, 'when acting in concert with the Allied Powers they concur in all those vague generalities of verbal reprobation which . . . bind them to no specific efficient measures . . . but when pressed by the Duke to prove their sincerity by adopting such a line of action as shall be really efficient, their answer is a mere tissue of excuses, founded, some of them, on misrepresentation of fact, others on circumstances of which the existence may be protracted to an indefinite extent, and of a nature which they pretend not to have the power, and certainly do not exhibit the least inclination to alter or remove—viz. "to apply to the Slave Trade the punishment of piracy is beyond the limits of political conference. 'To affix to it the penalty of death is a judicial or legislative measure, and must therefore wait the approbation of public opinion . . . the registration of slaves will be taken into consideration when the time for so doing shall have arrived, and then possibly may be permitted; but would be a violation of the right of property, which the laws of Great Britain respect even in its extravagance and caprices.

"The rights of mutual search, however limited, would have the most disastrous consequences."

'What expectation, after this, of any good from that quarter can be rationally indulged?'<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile, side by side with the meannesses and trivialities of diplomacy, the British Navy was, as usual, performing to the full the task allotted to it. *Ab uno disce omnes*. As an example of its ceaseless

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 86\*-7\*.

work of watch and ward take the following instance :

‘ Sir Robert Mends was commander of a squadron on the coast of Africa, stationed there by the British Government to prevent the infraction of the laws for the abolition of the Slave Trade. He sent Lt. Mildmay with the boats belonging to his vessel to reconnoitre the river Bonny, a place notorious for carrying on this traffic. The boats having crossed the bar about 7 o’clock, six sail, two schooners and four brigs, were observed lying at anchor off the town of Bonny. When the boats were about four miles off, they displayed their colours ; and, as they advanced, the slave vessels were soon moored across the stream with springs on their cables, all armed, with apparently about 400 slaves on board, and the crews fully prepared to resist any attack that might be made upon them. The two schooners and three of the brigs opened a heavy fire of canister and grape shot and musketry upon the English boats as they advanced.

‘ When the latter were near enough for their shots to take effect, the firing was returned. They advanced, and in a short time took possession of all the vessels. . . . Many of the slaves jumped overboard during the engagement and were devoured by sharks.’ On board one of the ships ‘ Lt. Mildmay observed a slave girl about 12 or 13 years of age, in irons to which was fastened a thick iron chain, 10 feet in length, that was dragged along as she moved. He ordered the girl to be instantly released from the fetter ; and that the captain who had treated her so cruelly might not be ignorant of the pain inflicted

upon an unprotected and innocent child, the irons were ordered to be put upon him.' <sup>1</sup>

In 1824 an Act of Parliament was passed declaring it to be piracy to be concerned in the Slave Trade, and a convention was concluded between Great Britain and the United States for making the enactments of the two countries operate reciprocally on the subjects and citizens of each other. The Senate of the United States, however, only ratified the convention upon condition that the reciprocity of the measure were destroyed, so that American cruisers would have the right to detain and examine British ships, whilst their own were protected from similar treatment. Canning was therefore premature in expressing his gratification 'that the two greatest maritime nations in the world should so far compromise their maritime pride as to act together for the accomplishment of such a purpose.' <sup>2</sup> On the other hand, by a treaty between Great Britain and Brazil, the latter undertook within four years to forbid the subjects of the Empire of Brazil from carrying on the trade in slaves on the coast of Africa under any pretext or in any manner whatever. <sup>3</sup>

Although the Slave Trade had been formally abolished by France, the traffic was carried on for some years in the French colonies, notwithstanding the presence of a naval force to prevent it; and vessels were fitted out at Nantes, Bordeaux and other ports, which were allowed by the carelessness or connivance of the authorities to proceed unmolested to their destination. 'The law of Britain

<sup>1</sup> *Annual Register*, 1823, pp. 88\*-9\*.    <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 1824, pp. 80\*-1\*.  
*Ibid.* pp. 72\*-5\*.



might be violated occasionally in a remote colony ; but it was never suspected that slave ships were fitted out from Liverpool or Bristol ; while in France both the public voice and judicial proceedings proved that individual love of gain was too powerful for the law.' <sup>1</sup>

There can be no question that jealousy of England stood in the way of reform. When, in 1827, the Government brought forward a bill to deal more stringently with the evils, the Marquis de Marbois, in emphasising the fact that England, which now moved heaven and earth for the general abolition of the Slave Trade, had once waged war with Spain to secure a monopoly of it, added, ' In this apparent change of policy it is just to acknowledge that England is ever consistent, ever commercially wise ; for her proscription of the trade has still for its object the promotion of her shipping interest—the advantages of trade and navigation. These interests would be injured if England, having deprived herself of the Slave Trade, allowed the ships and mariners of other nations to continue engaged in it.' This reasoning extorted an indignant protest from the Duc de Broglie. ' There are men,' he said, ' in that country (England) whom I love, men whom I revere, and among them I assign the first rank to those who have consecrated the best years of their lives to the abolition of the Slave Trade, and who now in the declining vigour of their days devote what yet remains to the abolition of slavery. I take actions as I find them, not tracing their motives with a malicious satisfaction, as if to find out, when

<sup>1</sup> *Annual Register*, 1826, pp. 241-4.

no necessity requires it, the reasons of professions decidedly honourable, or to endeavour to surprise in the workings of the human heart interested motives and the selfish impulses of our nature. At all events in this case, when the British ministry zealously seeks to effect the abolition of the Slave Trade, when it urges and begs and prays others to abate its efforts, I do not see any reason to impute to its motives any other interest than that of justice and humanity. Gracious God ! of what importance is it to England, mistress as she is of the sea, mistress of India, mistress of seven-eighths of all the colonies of the world . . . of what importance to her can be the internal government of affairs in two petty islands, such as Martinique and Guadeloupe . . . of two islands of which scarce a person in France knows anything except that it costs thirty millions a year to keep them in some sort of beggarly existence.<sup>1</sup>

At last, in the councils of the French the enlightened view gained the day. In 1831 and again in 1833, France and England agreed that their cruisers should stop and overhaul any suspected vessel, whether flying the French or the British flag. Palmerston, however, desired to go further and, in combination with France, made representations to the other Powers which succeeded in inducing them to agree to the principle adopted by the British and French Governments. The new convention, to which all the chief European Powers were to be parties, was ready for signature when it became evident that a change of government would take

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* 1827, pp. 207-8.

place in England. Guizot, to punish Palmerston for his attitude towards France, refused his signature. With the coming into office of Lord Aberdeen, Guizot's objections ceased; and on December 20, 1841, the Treaty, regulating the right of search, was signed in London. The French Chamber, however, proved to be opposed to its ratification; and in November, 1842, the definite withdrawal of France was announced. Three years later the question was reopened; and in May, 1845, a new Treaty was signed, providing that in future the right of search in African Waters should be exercised by a joint Franco-British Squadron.<sup>1</sup> Henceforth, with the growth of a more sensitive public opinion throughout the civilised world, the horrors of the Slave Trade became, for the most part, a thing of the past; and the evils of the system were concentrated on the slave raids in Africa, which transferred their unhappy victims from one part of the Continent to another. None the less the work done by the British Navy in setting the standard, to which other nations gradually conformed, can never be overrated; and has, perhaps, escaped its due meed of recognition by the general body of men.

In the years that followed the settlement of 1815, whatever were the sins of Great Britain, she did not assuredly manifest a presumptuous pride in her maritime supremacy. More than ever the French Navy was allowed to approach perilously near a position of equality with that of England. Guizot expounded to Lord Aberdeen's willing ears the folly

<sup>1</sup> *England and the Orleans Monarchy*, by J. Hall, pp. 332-4.

of the old doctrine *si vis pacem para bellum* ;<sup>1</sup> and meanwhile France armed to the teeth. There was no eminent sailor in public life ; so that the great soldier-statesman who watched, with extreme caution and diffidence, over the defences of the country, was allowed to allocate a greater portion of the moneys voted for fortresses and stationary posts, and less for a mobile fleet, than would have been the case had there been at the time influential upholders of the Blue Water doctrine. Although good work was done by ships and sailors in the Black Sea during the Crimean War, it cannot be said that sea-power played a very leading part in the operations ; and the great expedition to the Baltic which started with un-English fanfaronade and boasting from Lord Palmerston and Admiral Napier proved in the result a fiasco.

Very striking is the difference between the attitude of Great Britain in 1805, 1814-5 and her attitude in 1856. When in 1805 the Russian Government proposed that a revision of the Maritime Code should be entrusted to the European Congress which it was intended to hold, the British reply was that 'next to the fundamental laws on which the free and happy constitution of our Government is built, the received and established principles of maritime law, by which the power and prosperity of the country is supported and promoted, are nearest to the heart and most rooted to the attachment of every British citizen, and that no statesman could be found in this country who would recommend or justify the referring of these great and essential

<sup>1</sup> *Sir R. Peel, from his Papers*, vol. iii. pp. 409-10.

principles to any mediation or revision.’<sup>1</sup> Again, at the European Settlement of 1814-5, Great Britain openly declared that she could not tolerate the rules of war at sea being made the subject of discussion by the Allied Powers. In 1856 we find her meekly accepting from a Conference the revocation of those rules which she had formerly declared to be essential for her very existence. The four rules of the Declaration of Paris, 1856, were as follows :

1. Privateering is and remains abolished.
2. The neutral flag covers enemy’s goods, with the exception of contraband of war.
3. Neutral goods, with the exception of contraband of war, are not liable to capture under the enemy’s flag.
4. Blockades, in order to be binding, must be effective ; that is to say, maintained by a force sufficient really to prevent access to the coast of the enemy.

We are not here discussing the wisdom or the unwisdom of these concessions, but merely noting them as signs of the chastened temper of the times. The reason lay partly in the time-spirit which was against militarism in all its manifestations, and partly in the fact that men did not seriously realise what was the significance of sea-power. The wise few may have known ; but, if so, they failed to impart their knowledge to others ; and so resembled the men in the Epistle who, having the gift of

<sup>1</sup> *Selected Despatches relating to the Formation of the 3rd Coalition, 1804-1805*, ed. J. H. Rose, p. 162.

tongues, were without interpreters of their utterances. It is certain that Captain Mahan was the first to bring home to the man in the street, and, after all, the ordinary cabinet minister is only the man in the street writ large, the meaning of the influence of sea-power upon history. Still, when that meaning had been realised, British statesmen continued to think that the claims of civilisation demanded a less ruthless system of naval warfare than the system which had been practised in the past.

Sir Robert Morier, whose mind always refused to run in prescribed channels, maintained that 'after binding ourselves by the Declaration of Paris it was little less than suicide on our part not to carry it out to its logical consequences, by declaring all private property at sea inviolable, irrespective of the character of the ship by which it was conveyed. . . . As matters now stand, we are in the peculiar position of having twice the fighting power, balanced by probably not less than six or seven times the amount of the vulnerability of any other Maritime State ; by the proposed alteration in Maritime Law it is true that, *commercially speaking*, all parties will become equally invulnerable, but the manner in which this general invulnerability would affect the various Maritime Powers would be very unequal and, in my opinion, altogether to our advantage ; for we should obtain the double benefit of getting rid of more vulnerability than any one else, whilst adding to our fighting power in a far larger proportion than any one else, the amount of force required for the purpose of defending our

commerce (and which would otherwise become available for offensive purposes) being proportionate not to the amount of fighting to be got through, which remains a fixed quantity, but to the extent of our commerce, and therefore bearing a much larger ratio to the actual offensive apparatus than that borne by the navies of other Powers, who, with the possibility of the same amount of offensive work on their hands have six times less commerce to look after.' <sup>1</sup>

Morier recognises that there was 'at present on the part of the public in England a want of caring for international questions and . . . an ignorance in regard to them, combined with a definite will not to be enlightened, which is truly appalling.' <sup>2</sup>

The last paragraph of a letter to Lord Derby (July 1, 1874) connects the subject with the general subject of this volume. 'In your late speech at the Merchant Taylors, to my inexpressible joy and delight, you told Europe that the present Government considered the maintenance of the peace of the world as a concern second in importance only to that of maintaining the peace of England. You thus formally repudiated the Manchester doctrine of England's international outlawry or standing outside of the European peace. We have, therefore, thank God, returned to what our Anglo-Saxon forefathers would have called the Fridborg or *Frank-pledge* (*pacis plegium*) of the European community. But to carry out the simile we find ourselves standing in the European 'folk-mote' as

<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs of Sir R. Morier*, vol. ii. pp. 384-5.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 392.

having given security, whose value is absurdly in excess of that given by our peers. Could a new policy be better initiated than by recovering those pledges and thus putting ourselves on a footing of equality with our neighbours ? ' <sup>1</sup>

The course taken in the present war, wherein Germany has thrown to the winds the recognised practices of war, as well by sea as by land, renders the discussion an academic one ; but, as things seemed at the time, there was much force in Morier's reasoning.

In fact, the Declaration of London, which is outside our ken, extended yet further, in favour of neutral Powers, the rules of naval warfare. It is true that the Declaration was not finally accepted by Great Britain, the House of Lords having rejected the Naval Prize Bill ; but that it came so near to adoption shows what was the temper of British statesmen. It was not their fault that the ruthlessness of German methods forbade that the war should be waged with kid gloves, and that in the general *mélée* neutrals have had a difficult time between the hammer and the anvil of contending Empires.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 392.



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